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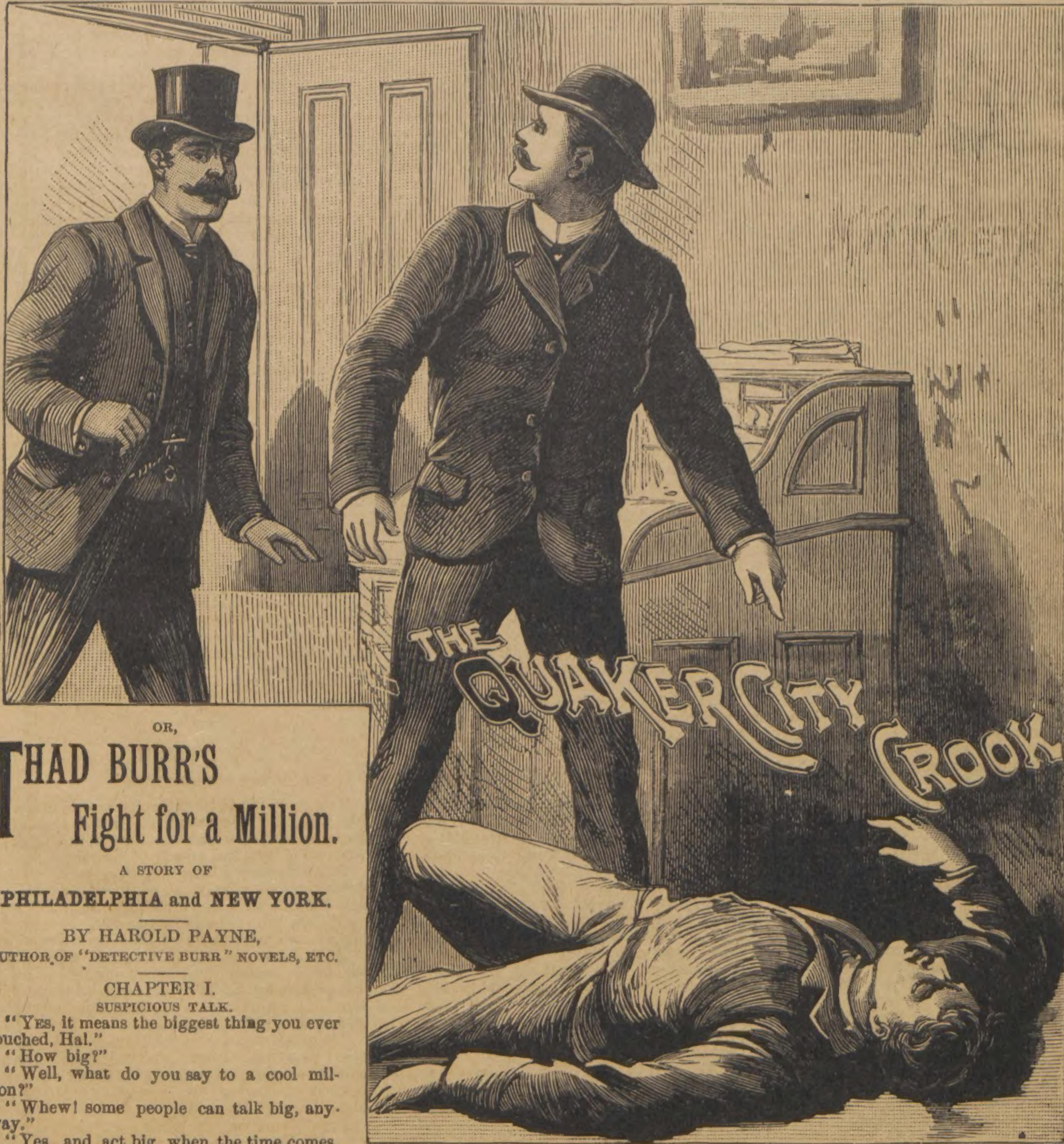
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OR, THAD BURR'S Fight for a Million.

A STORY OF
PHILADELPHIA and NEW YORK.

BY HAROLD PAYNE,
AUTHOR OF "DETECTIVE BURR" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I. SUSPICIOUS TALK.

"Yes, it means the biggest thing you ever touched, Hal."

"How big?"

"Well, what do you say to a cool million?"

"Whew! some people can talk big, anyway."

"Yes, and act big, when the time comes, as you have good reason to know."

"YES, THE POOR FELLOW HAS BEEN MURDERED!" CRIED THE DETECTIVE.

The two speakers were passengers on the Pennsylvania Railroad, on their way from Philadelphia to New York.

They were in one of the regular day coaches, and the time was late in the afternoon.

They had the appearance of well-to-do business men, except that they were perhaps a trifle over-dressed, especially one of them.

And, strange to say, this was the eldest one of the two.

He was a man of perhaps fifty or fifty-five, with gray hair and beard, the latter trimmed to a point, a florid complexion, rather fine dark eyes, and, upon the whole, what would be called a handsome man, and, as I said, dressed with pronounced elegance.

The other, apparently his junior by twenty years, not being more than thirty or thirty-five, was neither prepossessing nor attractive, and was much more plainly dressed than the older man.

Another marked difference between the two was their evident dispositions, for, while the older traveler appeared to be the soul of jollity and good humor, the younger one evidently was somewhat morose—his temperament corresponding with his complexion, which was dark and sallow.

The younger man reflected for some moments after his companion's last remark, and then observed in a sullen tone:

"It is going to cost some money to swing a scheme like this, though, and where is that to come from?"

"That is the little matter I wanted to explain to you. You asked me before we started what I was coming to New York for, and I told you I would explain on the way. Well, it is for the purpose of procuring the capital to begin operations."

"Um! You have friends over here, then?"

The elder man chuckled significantly.

"Well, yes, you might call him that—a business friend. Anybody is a friend in business who allows you to transact business with him at a good profit to himself."

"Who is the party?" asked the younger man, impatiently.

"Can't you guess?" laughed his friend.

"I haven't the least idea."

"Don't you remember old Corkscrew?"

"The Devil!"

"About as near it as any human being ever was," laughed the elder. "Nevertheless, he will serve our purpose at a time when no one else will, and we have got to put up with him."

"But I thought he never loaned money except on the best of security?" the other urged.

"Neither does he, as a general thing; but, like everybody else, he is inclined to take big chances, once in a while, when he sees a big profit in it."

"Am I to understand, then, that this old skin-flint is to be a partner in this transaction?"

"That is about the size of it."

The young man shook his head dubiously.

"I should have nothing to do with him," he said morosely.

"Why not?"

"He is a dangerous confederate to let into your confidence."

"Not when it is to his interest to seal his lips."

"There is just the point. The moment he gets you into his power, which he is sure to do in a thing like this, he will roast you. I should have nothing to do with such a rascal."

"But, my dear boy," persisted the other, persuasively, "it is but only chance."

The other was silent for a moment and then asked, in a better spirit:

"Have you ever had any dealings with the old scamp?"

"Very little," was the reply.

"I thought so. How did you come to think of going to him?"

"I was told about him by a friend."

"Who was this friend?"

"Albert Beach."

Now the young man laughed.

"Just what I thought."

"Why?"

"One rogue drumming up business for another!"

"You have not a very high opinion of Al, then?"

"Just about as high as I have of old Corkscrew. It would be like the kettle calling the pot black for one to accuse the other of any sort of wickedness. But, about this grand scheme. What is it? You have only given me an inkling of it. You said something about wanting me to impersonate somebody. What is it all, anyway?"

The elder glanced about the car to make sure that no one was "piping" him, to use the parlance of these gentry, and seeing nobody near at hand but an old fellow in the first seat behind, and he sound asleep, he lowered his voice and proceeded:

"I thought I had told you more of it."

"No, you have not told enough for me to comprehend what the racket is."

"Well, here it is: You remember reading the paper about the wealthy Miss Melrose, of Melrose House, Philadelphia, being about to marry Lord Noddleford of England?"

"Yes, I believe I do."

"Well, his lordship is to arrive in Philadelphia in about two weeks, and the wedding is to take place a few days after his arrival. But, as his lordship, like pretty much all of his kind, is as poor as a church mouse, it is understood that his prospective bride is to settle half her fortune—that is to say, about a million—on him before the wedding."

"Well?"

"Well, if my plans do not miscarry, his lordship will not land—or, if he does, he will not see Miss Melrose, right away, at least. She will see somebody whom she will take for him, however, and if that somebody is not an idiot he will succeed in getting the million bones settled upon himself in such a way that he will have no trouble in securing the money."

"And the man to take his place?"

"Is Hal—otherwise Henry Adair."

"Myself?" almost screeched the young man.

"Certainly!" laughed the other.

"This is insanity!"

"Why so?"

"The thing can never be accomplished."

"I should like to know why?"

"There are many reasons. Among them, it is not at all likely that I could pass myself off upon her for Lord Noddleford, no matter how much I might disguise myself."

"There is where you make the mistake. Miss Melrose has never set eyes upon his lordship in her life, and one man, so that he came with the proper credentials, will pass as well as another. You see, the marriage has been arranged through mutual friends, and the contracting parties have never met."

"Nevertheless, she undoubtedly has seen his picture," objected the young man.

"She certainly has, and there is just where my game is strong. You see, I never enter into a thing until I know where I stand. I have attended to all the details. I have learned all the particulars of the affair, and among them, that Miss Melrose has his lordship's picture, and that is the very reason I selected yourself to play the part of his lordship's double."

"You don't mean to say that I look enough like him to pass for him?"

"With any one who has only seen his picture, yes."

"You have seen the picture, then?"

"Well, I should rather think so!" laughed the other, drawing the photograph from his pocket and holding it up for Adair's inspection.

The young man took the picture and scrutinized it closely for some minutes, and then handing it back, remarked:

"There is a striking resemblance," said the young man dryly; "I must admit that."

Somehow, confidential as had been their conversation, the old farmer in the seat behind them had awakened, and when the photograph was held up for the young man's inspection he arose on his elbow and took a squint at it with one eye.

The men in front did not notice the action, however, and when one of them glanced back a moment later the old chap appeared to be still sleeping.

"Yes, the resemblance, while not as striking as I have seen between men, is sufficiently so for our purpose."

"Still, it is going to be a difficult and haz-

ardous role to play," assumed the young man, doubtfully.

"Not so difficult or hazardous as you imagine," assured his friend, encouragingly. "I have arranged all the details, and will give you instructions all along, so that there will be no trouble about it."

The young man sighed wearily.

"I shall need a good deal of coaching, I'm afraid," he said.

"Did you never do any of this sort of business before?"

"A little, but not in anything like so difficult a role as this."

"Still, on the stage you have had to impersonate all sorts of characters."

"Ah, but that is a different matter. You have your audience at a distance, so they cannot see through your make-up. In this case—"

"It will not be necessary to make up, except in manners and conversation. Your genius for imitating the English dialect, and for aping the English manners, which I have seen so often, was what induced me to select you for your part. I am sure you will succeed in the part, as you have always done in your various roles on the stage."

Thus flattered, the young man murmured:

"I shall try, but—"

"Then you will succeed," interposed the other.

The two men talked on for some time, but upon other subjects, and at length lapsed into silence.

About seven o'clock in the evening they arrived at the Jersey City Depot, and hastening out of the car, walked rapidly through the great station, and at last took the ferry for New York City.

The two men stood out upon the bow of the boat, and as there was considerable of a crowd, at this time of day, neither one noticed that the old farmer who had occupied the seat behind them in the train was within a few feet of them.

The old 'hayseed' was apparently paying no attention to them; but, although he seemed to be absorbed in the magnificent view up the river, he did not lose a word of their conversation.

"Shall you go to the old Corkscrew's at once?" asked Adair, after the boat was under way.

"No," returned the other, in the same subdued voice. "We shall get dinner first. It will not be time to see him before close upon midnight. You see, the old schemer is peculiar about his visiting hours. He does not care to receive visitors, especially upon particular business, until a late hour."

"I am aware of that, from the dealings I have had with him."

From this on they maintained silence, and as soon as the shore was reached, they took a hack and drove away.

"I shall see where those chaps go," mused the Headquarters Special, Thad Burr, otherwise the old farmer, "and if they do not play their cards very fine they will slip up on their game."

And he called a cab and put off after them!

CHAPTER II.

THE "CORKSCREW."

THE Special had no difficulty in following his men, for they went no further than a large restaurant which was located in Greenwich street near the corner of Vesey.

When he saw where they were going, the detective took advantage of the darkness inside the cab to remove his disguise, putting away the gray wig and beard and substituting a heavy moustache of dark-brown color.

He had directed his driver to go wherever the hack containing the conspirators went, and as soon as the latter drove up in front of the big restaurant and stopped, Thad alighted and followed them inside.

The place was pretty well filled, as it generally is at this time of day, but he was fortunate enough to get a seat at an adjoining table and facing the now under-shadow men.

But this served no better purpose than to give him a chance to watch them, as he could hear nothing that passed between them.

Meanwhile he was busy revolving in his

mind what would be the best modes of procedure, and also wondering what the two men would do to kill the time intervening between them and midnight, when they were to visit the Shylock, whom they had spoken of as the Corkscrew.

But he was not to be kept long in suspense.

They did not tarry long at their meal, and when they had finished they left the restaurant at once.

The shadower of course was upon their heels, and was surprised to see that they had not kept their carriage in waiting, as had his cab, and both suspects started off on foot.

They continued along Greenwich street as far as Barclay and here climbed the stairs and took the first up-town Elevated train on the Ninth avenue line.

Thad was on the same train and saw them get off at Thirty-fourth street.

As this was the street in which Thad lived, he wondered where they were going in that neighborhood.

The men stopped at a house on the opposite side of the street from where the detective lived, rung the bell and were admitted.

There happened to be a policeman on the beat with whom Thad was well acquainted, and asking him to watch the house and see if the two visitors came out, he ran across to his own home for the purpose of making another alteration in his disguise.

He was gone about ten minutes, and returned to be informed that the two callers had not yet come forth; but, though Thad watched the house until midnight they did not put in a reappearance, which satisfied him that they must have given the policeman the slip.

"Never mind," he mused, philosophically. "I shall get upon their track again;" and with this comforting reflection he went home and as he had lost a good deal of sleep of late, retired at once.

Meanwhile, the two men who had given him the slip so neatly—or the policeman, rather—walked calmly to the Elevated station of the Sixth avenue line and took an up-town train, and did not leave it until they reached Harlem.

Alighting at One Hundred and Forty-fourth street, the two men put off across the fields and, among the market-gardens, until at length they came to a wretched-looking, one-story house, perched away up on the rocks, and reached by a rickety flight of steps.

"This is a fine dwelling-place for a human being," growled Adair, as he groped his way up the steps in the wake of his companion.

"Yes," laughed the other, "if any human being lived here. But, it is rather tough on human beings in general to call this old villain one. However, we should not speak too soon. This appears to be the place, according to the directions given me by Beach, but I may have made a mistake, after all."

Reaching the top of the rocks, at last, the men had considerable difficulty in making their way through the mass of rubbish, empty boxes and barrels, old crates, and the like, to the door of the shanty, and when they reached it there did not appear to be any light within.

Nevertheless, the elder man knocked at the door.

After a long wait, the door was opened a few inches and a face appeared.

The darkness was too intense to admit of more than the vaguest shadow of the face being seen, and then came a voice almost faint in its speech:

"Who vas dere?"

As the elder man had never met the money-lender before, he put his hand behind him and poked his companion as a signal for him to do the talking, so the latter said:

"Sly fox never gets caught, Corkscrew!"

The old sharper mumbled something unintelligible to the visitors, coughed significantly, and then asked:

"Who you vas?"

"Don't you remember Dudley?" queried Adair, in an insinuating tone.

The Jew—for such he was—appeared to reflect for some time; but, finally, opening the door, signified with a nod that they might enter.

The two men stepped into the gloomy place, which, as they had surmised, was in total

darkness, and they were unable to proceed far on account of some sort of obstruction in the way.

As soon as he had closed the door and barred it, the old Israelite fumbled about in the darkness for a long time in search of a match, meanwhile keeping up a sort of mumbling or purring, which was not unlike that of an old cat.

At length the match was found, but another delay was caused by the hunting and lighting of a dirty, cracked old lamp, which, when lighted, threw little more light than a fire-bug.

It sufficed, however, to give the visitors a vague idea of the character of the place into which they had come.

The shanty, which was of considerable proportions when you came to get inside of it, was crammed to the roof with every conceivable kind of goods and booty, leaving no room for doubt that the place was a "fence" for the reception of stolen goods.

There were articles of costly furniture, bits of rare bric-a-brac, paintings, gold and silver utensils, damask curtains, rich Turkey carpets, and, in fact, such a collection as might be expected to accumulate from the combined contributions of the thousands of thieves of a great city.

As for the old receiver himself, never did the pseudonym of "Screw" fit a mortal more aptly.

He must have been at least eighty years old, tall, bent and withered, so that his complexion resembled a shrunken lemon. A long, tangled gray beard concealed nearly the whole of his face, except the crafty, black little eyes, and the long, twisted nose, which was sufficient to give rise to the title of corkscrew. His hair was also long, gray and matted about his shoulders like a great, filthy mantle. His clothes were a mass of rags, while a greasy skull-cap covered his crown, giving him the uncanny appearance of some old wizard or sheik.

When he had lighted the lamp, the old chap scanned his visitors from head to foot, giving particular attention to Adair, and at length his withered face lighted up with an expression of recognition. He indulged in a ghastly grin, exposing a mouth filled with yellow fangs, which gave him the appearance of some ravenous beast, and at length said:

"Oh, you vos Dudley, ain't it?"

This was a name the young man had given him on some former occasion when he had had dealings with the money-lender.

"That's the time you hit it, Corkscrew," replied the other, laughing. "I thought you must recognize me."

"Oh, I vas reckonsnize you der minit v'at I caught me dot voice, already. Vell, my dear, v'at de old man can do for you dis evening? You vas got some diamonds or some gold vatches v'at vas heavy to carry about und vants de old man to take dem und giff you de monish."

"No, Corkscrew; our business is of a different nature, this time. In fact, it is my friend here, and not myself, who has business with you."

The old vulture turned and surveyed the gorgeously attired man with an expression bordering closely upon disdain.

"Who vas be, Dudley?" he muttered. "I don't vas reckonsnize dot man."

"This is my good friend, Mr. Monte Munson, Corkscrew," the young man hastened to explain.

"Oh, vas dot de shentleman v'at Beach dalks about?"

"The same," responded Munson.

"Oh, I pegs den t'ousand bardons, my dear!" cried the Hebrew, bowing almost to the ground and rubbing his bony old hands. "I vas delighted to make your ogguaintance. I believe Beach said you vas vant to do some peesness mit me?"

"Yes, that is my desire," responded the other dryly, "provided we can agree upon terms."

"Oh, dere now, my dear, you talks apout de old man agreeing upon terms! Anypoty v'at knows de old man vill dell you dat he is de most easiest berson in de world to git along mit. In fact, eferybody says de old man is too good; he don't vas dake gare of himself in his desires and solicitations und kind vishes und gonsiderations for udders, und—"

"Did Beach mention what the nature of

the contract was to be?" interrupted Munson.

"No; he only said you vas about to impark in a pig spegulation, und wanted me to gabitalize it. But I don't know vy he sendt you to me, v'en he knows dat monish ish fery tight mit me, fery tight, und for dot reason de old man ish gombelled to sharge a leetle more for de uses of it dan his heart und his consciences und his souls would like."

But the old man had struck the wrong party this time to make any impression with that sort of palaver. Munson was equal to all such overtures as this, and moreover, he had no patience with anybody who prefaces a business transaction in that manner. He therefore spoke up rather peremptorily:

"Oh, very well; if it is going to inconvenience you in the least I sha'n't bother you. I shall have no trouble in procuring all the money I want in a transaction like this. Good-evening!"

With that he turned toward the door with the apparent intention of taking his leave.

The ruse had the desired effect.

With an expression of mingled surprise and regret, the old scamp caught him by the sleeve and pleadingly said:

"No, no, mine friend! Don't go. De old man has plendy monish—plendy. V'at I vas dell Beach vas dat at de dime he spoke, de old man vas a leetle gramped. Dond't you see? Not now."

"Oh, you've replenished since then?" and with a hard, dry laugh, he turned about.

"Yes, yes. Replenished," chuckled the Jew, rubbing his hands.

"Been cashing in some of your chips, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes. Vill you valk dis vay, shen-dlemens?"

So saying, he started, lamp in hand, along a narrow defile hedged on either side by confused heaps of plunder, just leaving room enough for a single person to walk between.

The course led in a winding way to the further end or corner of the shanty.

When the Jew had reached his destination and sat the lamp down, the two men found themselves in a stranger and more weird place than they could have imagined at their entrance into the place.

It should have been explained that Adair's former transactions with this Shylock had been in a different house, which the reader will have an opportunity of visiting later on.

In the corner of the room stood a sort of desk made of heavy dark wood, the top of which was surmounted by a number of grinning skulls, and at each end stood a complete human skeleton, as if guarding the mysterious desk or cabinet!

"Sit down, my friends," commanded the Jew, pointing to a couple of dilapidated chairs.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRANSACTION.

MUNSON and Adair seated themselves and awaited the action of the venerable rogue, who puttered about for some time, but at length seated himself and, turning to Munson, asked:

"Vell, mine friend, v'at vas der peesness?"

Munson explained in detail the scheme he had in view, not forgetting to put great emphasis upon the probable enormous profits to be derived from it for all parties concerned.

At its conclusion the old man sighed deeply and said:

"Vell, mine friend, it looks like a 'great schemes, but dere vas very great dangers, also."

"Not so great as you imagine. I have everything so well arranged that only one person will stand any risk of getting caught—my friend here—and I imagine he knows how to take care of himself."

The old man looked at Adair and chuckled.

"Oh, Dudley?" he said. "Yes, yes, Dudley vas know how to take care von himself, I beat you; but, dot vas not der question, mine dear."

"Well, what is the question?"

"Der monish, mine dear."

"What do you mean?"

The Quaker City Crook.

"If der scheme fails, mine friend, v'at becomes of mine goot monish?"

"Why, if the scheme falls through," responded Munson abruptly, "you will lose your money of course, just the same as if you put it into stocks which failed to yield or into a bank that went up the spout."

"Oh, mine dear, v'at I do den?" whined the man of money.

"Exactly as you would do if you put your money elsewhere and lost it. But in this case I do not anticipate there will be any loss. Besides, remember the enormous margin on your investment."

"How much vas dat?" questioned the Shylock, hungrily.

"Well, if we succeed, as I have no reason to doubt we will, there will be a cool million to divide between three of us."

"And how much monish vill it require?"

"Oh, something like ten thousand dollars," answered Munson carelessly. "That is all."

"Mine cracious, mine friend! you talk about ten t'ousand tollars as if it vas no monish at all. Mine dear, it vas a great deal of monish."

"A mere bagatelle. No more than I have lost and won at a sitting at Monte Carlo many a time. Besides, think of the enormous profit of three hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars on an investment of ten thousand dollars! What could you invest the money in that would yield such a profit?"

"Dot vas so," assented the old vulture reflectively while an avaricious light burned in his eye. "Der only t'ing vas der hazard—der shance of losing it all."

"Now, see here," cried Munson impatiently, "if you wish to go into this thing, say so at once. If not, say as much and let us have an end of it. You are not the only man in the world who has money, and not the only one who is anxious to make more. What do you say? Speak out quick, or I am off."

"Oh, I haf no objegshuns," caught up the Jew quickly. "But you know, mine friend, it vas always better to haf an understanding before going into somet'ings."

"Have you the money at hand?" demanded Munson bluntly.

"You don't vant it all at vonce, mine friend?"

"Yes, every penny of it."

"Mine dear—"

"Have you the money at hand, I asked? If not, the bargain is off, so far as you are concerned."

"I s'posh I could get it, but—"

"Then out with it! Let us have no more nonsense about it."

"The 'capitalist' reflected for some time, his face undergoing a series of remarkable distortions and grimaces, but at length he said:

"Von't five t'ousand do you to-night, und te rest in a day or two, mine friend?"

"No, sir, that won't do!" uttered Munson vehemently, rising. "And, what is more, I shall waste no more time here. If the money is not forthcoming at once, I am off!"

"Oh, mine friend, you vas so impatient," protested the old scamp, jumping up.

"You shall haf de monish right avay."

With that he began fumbling about his rags and at length brought forth a key.

Munson resumed his seat and he and Adair watched the old Hebrew's proceedings with interest.

After a great ado, pretending not to be able to find the keyhole, and finding many other excuses for delay, he at length succeeded in unlocking one of the drawers of the cabinet.

Then followed an interminable interval of fumbling about in the drawer among a mass of papers and other rubbish, accompanied with the usual amount of grumbling, grunting and purring, and when the two men's patience was about exhausted, he brought forth an immense leather wallet.

Placing it on the desk, he turned upon Munson again and asked:

"V'ere vas der babers, mine friend?"

"What papers?"

"Don't I vas had some babers to show somedings dat I vas gif you der monish?"

"Not a paper!" averred Munson, gruffly.

"V'at! don't I vas got a receipt?"

Munson reflected a moment, and then answered:

"Oh, well; I'll give you a receipt. Let me have a pen and ink. There can be no harm in giving you a receipt, I reckon."

The Jew brought pen, ink and paper and Munson, seating himself at the desk, wrote a simple receipt, acknowledging the money, and handing it to the old skinflint, who examined it critically, and his countenance took on an expression of disappointment.

"Dis dond't vas said anyt'ing apout v'at der monish vas for," he grumbled.

"Well, what of that?"

"I vant somet'ing to show for v'at I giffs you der monish."

"What do you take me for?" sneered Munson, with a scowl. "An infant?"

"V'at's der matter?"

"Do you imagine I'm such an ass as to give you an acknowledgment with my signature to it, which, if it should fall into the hands of the police, or you should take it into your cursed old head to give me up, would suffice to put a rope round my neck? I guess not!"

"But der bolice don't vas get it; und, mine friend, you know you can drust me not to gif you avay."

"That may all be, but I prefer not giving you a chance. So count out the skads and let us be off. We have spent too much time with you already."

For the first time, the Jew exhibited indications of losing his temper, for, picking up the wallet and thrusting it into his bosom, he declared stoutly:

"Den you don't vas get der monish!"

Munson sprung to his feet and for a moment seemed undecided what course to adopt.

At one time he appeared on the point of leaving the place without further parley, but, turning upon the Jew, he glared at him a moment, and then suddenly springing at him and clutching him by the throat, he said in a low fierce tone:

"See here, Jew, give me that money, or by heaven, I'll murder you on the spot!"

But, although it was evident the old man was terrified by the threat, his love for his money appeared to be stronger than his love of life, and he clung all the tighter to the wallet which he hugged to his heart.

This added ten-fold to the genteel desperado's fury.

He glanced in silence at the cringing man for an instant, then releasing his grip upon his throat, stepped back and drew out a weapon.

There was a cold, deliberate, fiendish glitter in Munson's eye, as he said:

"Now hand over that wallet!"

The Jew's terrible peril flashed upon him then.

Growing ghastly with terror and trembling as with an ague, he dropped upon his knees, still hugging the wallet, and began to wail for mercy.

"Oh, don't kill me, mine dear friend!" he pleaded. "For de love of Gott, don't kill me!"

"Give me the money, then!"

"Yes! yes!" cried the old rogue. "I gif you de ten t'ousand tollars, und I gount der monish right avay."

"It will not be necessary," returned the other, coolly. "Just let me have the wallet as it is. That will suit me very well."

"But, mine friend, dere vas more as ten t'ousand tollars in der burse—more as ten times ten t'ousand!"

"That's all right," returned Munson, laughing. "All the better for me. I shouldn't kick if there were a cool million in it. Hand it over, and be quick about it!"

"But, mine friend, it was all der monish v'at I vas got in der world!" pleaded the son of Israel. "You wouldn't take der last cent v'at an old man vas got?"

"Wouldn't I?" laughed the outlaw. "Well, just try me. Especially of such an estimable old citizen as you. So, fork over, or something will happen, and that very suddenly."

Still the old man hesitated.

"I'll give you just one minute to yield that wallet, and if you don't comply in that time you are a dead man!"

The miserable old money-lender looked up into the scowling visage, hoping to find some pity or sympathy there, but saw none, and so reluctantly drew the wallet from his

bosom, and still more reluctantly laid it upon the desk before him.

Munson calmly picked it up and placed it in his own pocket, with the remark:

"That's right, old man. I haven't time now, but when I get to my hotel I shall count the contents of the purse, and give you credit for it, on account."

"But, mine friend," pleaded Shylock, "dond't you vas gif me a receipt for v'at dere vas in der bocket-pook?"

"There is your receipt!" and the robber tossed the paper he had written toward him.

"But, mine friend, dat vas only for ten t'ousand tollars! You should gif me receipt for all dere vas in der wallet."

"I tell you that I have not time to count it now, you old dotard. When I get to my hotel I will take time to count the money and mail you a receipt. Good-night, Father Abraham! Ta-ta! Pleasant dreams to you!"

And Munson strode out of the ill-smelling "fence," followed by his companion, both in a state of collapse over the good luck growing out of the Jew's stubbornness.

"Serves the old skinflint right," laughed Munson. "Possibly next time he will pony up the amount I call for and have done with it. As it is, this time, if he tells the truth, we are ahead somewhere in the neighborhood of forty thousand plunks."

"That ought to carry us through, swimmingly," responded his companion. "Will you still let the old chap in on the divvy?"

"Not a penny's worth," declared Munson, contemptuously. "Corkscrew is no longer in the divvy."

CHAPTER IV.

FRIENDS AND FOES.

THAD BURR had not been long in bed ere he discovered that it was one thing to retire and quite another to sleep.

The strange occurrence which he had witnessed on the train, and the mysterious manner in which the two men had given both him and the policeman the slip, combined to so perturb his mind that sleep was out of the question.

Going over the ground of the plot he had heard discussed, he decided that a great crime was about to be perpetrated, and realized that he alone could prevent its commission, for the reason that he alone was aware of its conception.

"There is but one thing for me to do," he told himself at last, "and that is to go over to Philadelphia, and either notify the chief of police or go in on my own account to ferret out the conspirators and prevent the perpetration of the crime. Let me see: where shall I begin?"

But, that part of the programme did not worry him long.

The young lady, Miss Melrose, was the first one to see. She could undoubtedly furnish him with a good deal of important data to work upon, and she could also furnish him the necessary substantial aid in the event of his working the case on his own hook.

Having settled the matter thus far, he was able to catch a few hours' sleep, but arose at a fairly early hour, and, as soon as he could perfect his arrangements for the trip, hurried away to the depot and took a train for Philadelphia.

Once again in the quiet old city, he set about finding out the address of the rich heiress who was to wed the English lord, to discover that Melrose House was in one of the fashionable suburbs, flanking the western end of Fairmount Park.

The day was fine, and as the horse-cars were execrably slow, he procured a horse and buggy from a livery stable and drove out to the mansion.

Thad was attired in a fashionable suit, in order that he might be received on an equal footing with the haughty heiress, as to prevent suspicion of his true character.

When the footman met him at the door, Thad sent in a card bearing the name: "Mr. Harry Harcourt Lumsden."

"That ought to be English enough and aristocratic enough to win her heart," he mused, as he sat in the drawing-room awaiting the arrival of the heiress.

The servant soon returned to say that Miss

Melrose would see him in a few minutes, and in a remarkably short time thereafter the young lady swept into the room.

Miss Melrose, as the detective saw her, did not impress him as being remarkable for beauty, although there was a certain nobility of cast and an indisputable indication of high breeding and intelligence, which went a great deal further with him than beauty.

But there was one thing in which he was agreeably disappointed. The young woman had none of the haughtiness he had expected to see in a lady of her rank and prospects.

On the contrary, she approached him familiarly, extended her hand and calling him by name, asked him to be seated.

"To what am I indebted for this visit, Mr. Lumsden?" she asked, as soon as she was seated.

"You will be surprised, but I trust not offended, when I tell you, Miss Melrose," he answered.

She certainly looked surprised at this beginning, for she stared at him as if she expected to discover in him some bearer of bad news.

"The fact is," he pursued promptly, "that having just arrived from England, I have made a discovery which may be of interest to you and those very dear to you."

"Gracious," she exclaimed, "what can it be? Please go on!"

He then related the account of the conspiracy, but disguised the details in such a way as to leave her in the dark as to the real conditions of the case.

This he deemed necessary to prevent any interference in the work, through the medium of private detectives, which is apt to occur when rich people's interests are at stake.

"This is terrible!" she ejaculated. "What is to be done?"

"There are several modes of procedure in a case like this," he answered. "Knowing the facts, you might put the case in the hands of the local police—"

"That is exactly what I shall do!" she interrupted.

"Which, of course, would entail publicity and unpleasant notoriety."

"That is true. With long, disgusting newspaper accounts and the terrible thing of having reporters running here seeking interviews. Oh, dear, that won't do at all. What would you suggest, Mr. Lumsden?"

"Another mode of procedure which I was about to suggest, would be to hire a reliable private detective, but the trouble is to secure such a person. So many of these private detectives are rogues, themselves, ready to profit by anything, and you can never tell whether they are working for or against you."

"How do you mean working against you?"

"Why, if the other party should see fit to pay more money than you do, the private detective will, in many cases, assist them to carry out their plots instead of preventing such a thing!"

"Oh, dear, this is terrible!" cried the lady in despair. "What shall I do?"

"Have you no father or brothers who could attend to the matter for you?"

"My father is dead and the only brother I have is traveling abroad."

Thad reflected a moment, and then said:

"After what I have told you, it would look like undue officiousness for me to offer my services, otherwise I should take great delight in working upon this case, just for the amusement to be got out of it. I have had some experience in this way—as an amateur—and would like nothing better. But, as I say, having told you as much as I have, it would look like undue officiousness for me to offer my services."

"By no means!" she declared eagerly. "I should like ever so much to have you undertake it, if you will, and, in addition to the anticipated pleasure, you shall be richly rewarded."

"I shall accept no reward unless I am successful. But, allow me to ask you a few questions which are necessary before it will be possible to start upon the work."

"Certainly. Any information I can give which will be of use to you, you are welcome to."

"In the first place, I wish to ask whether you have ever met Lord Noddleford or not."

"I never have."

"Tally one," mused Thad. "So, you would have to depend entirely for recognition upon the pictures you have seen of him?"

"Entirely; but, I have such perfect likenesses of his lordship that there will be no difficulty about that. Besides, he will be accompanied by my cousin, a gentleman who is a mutual friend."

"Ah, then, in that case, these sharpers will not find such easy work as they imagined. Still, it may be in the plan to do away with your cousin as well. What is the exact date at which you expect his lordship to arrive?"

"The twenty-fifth of this month."

"And this is the fifteenth, so it will be just ten days. Well, we have plenty of time to prepare. Will you allow me to look at one of his lordship's pictures?"

"With pleasure."

And excusing herself, the girl left the room, and soon returned with a photograph.

Thad saw that it was the one of which he caught the clandestine peep in the car. It was that of a melancholy-looking man of thirty or thirty five, and the resemblance between him and the younger of the two men he had seen in the car, was very strong—strong enough, indeed, that if they were dressed alike, one might be easily taken for the other.

After examining the picture carefully for some time, the detective asked:

"Can you spare this picture, or one like it, Miss Melrose?"

"Certainly; take that one along, if it will be of any assistance to you."

"It will aid me materially," he assured. "And as I look at this picture I am reminded to say that we have a very dangerous set to deal with."

"Indeed?" she gasped, with a terrified face.

"I mean in the sense of cunning and the advantages they possess to start with."

"What are the advantages?"

"For one thing, one of them bears a striking resemblance to his lordship."

"Horrors!"

"Another thing, they have somehow come in possession of a picture of his lordship, which, if I am not mistaken, is an exact copy of this one!"

The girl opened her eyes very wide.

"I wonder if it can be?" she murmured, half to herself.

"What?"

"Now that I have taken you into my confidence," she said, blushing, "I may as well tell you something. But first, let me ask you something."

"With pleasure."

"Is there such a thing as a protective agency for the benefit of noted persons crossing the sea?"

Thad thought he espied a clew a long way off and smiled.

"Not that I ever heard of," he replied. "I do not believe there is anything of the kind. Why do you ask?"

The girl blushed still more deeply, and finally said:

"This is what I was about to tell you. About a week ago an old gentleman called here—a very polite and respectable-looking old gentleman—and represented himself as being the agent for what he called the Trans-Atlantic Nobility Protective Association. He informed me that he was aware that my fiance would arrive on a certain date, and that it was the duty of the company to see that he arrived in safety. I was astonished to hear of such a thing, but considered it a very good institution, inasmuch as men of note are in constant danger from low, designing people, and Yankee-like, asked him what it was going to cost. He appeared to be almost insulted at the question, and finally told me that there was no expense attached to the affair—that is, there would be none for me or my intended, as the institution was kept up by subscription from the nobility and other notable persons. He said, however, that it would be necessary for him to have a photograph of his lordship to place in the private watchman's hands so that he might be able to recognize his lordship upon

his arrival. And so I gave him a photograph—one of the same series that you have."

"I understand it all, now," said Thad, smiling. "This is the very fellow who is at the head of this conspiracy. You say he is an old man?"

"Well, not so very old—fifty, maybe. He was very gray, but extremely good looking, well-dressed and spoke like a gentleman."

"The very man—there is no doubt of it! Did he give any name?"

"Why, yes; he said he was Count D'Arville."

Thad laughed.

"And you believed him, of course?"

"Certainly!" she replied, very much embarrassed. "I had no reason to doubt his word."

"Of course not; but you were sadly deceived by a notorious scoundrel, whose only object was to get possession of the picture in order that he might be able to secure some one who could impersonate his lordship and thus carry out his infamous scheme."

CHAPTER V.

TAKEN IN.

MUNSON and Adair gloated all the way from the old Shylock's shanty to the hotel where they were stopping over the haul they had made at the expense of the Corkscrew.

"That was the neatest thing I ever accomplished in my life," chuckled Munson. "A few more hauls like that, and it would not be necessary to go into the conspiracy in order to make a fortune."

"It was indeed a clever piece of business," laughed the other; "but, do you think the old chap will try to make trouble for us for it?"

"What trouble can he make?" sneered Munson.

"He might report the matter to the police."

"Not very likely. The old fence has about as little use for the police, I guess, as you and I have. But, suppose he does report to the police?"

"We will have to get out of town, that is all."

"Which we shall soon do, anyway."

"There might be another point of danger growing out of a thing of that kind."

"What is that?"

"If he should report the case, and divulge our plot—which would, of course, be telegraphed all over the country—it might be worth something to the Philadelphia police in preventing us from carrying out our little scheme."

"By Jove, my boy!" exclaimed Munson. "Since you mentioned it, I don't know but there may be something in that. We shall have to see the old son of Abraham again and fix him up."

"How will you arrange it with him?"

"Let's see; give him a receipt," laughed Munson, a happy thought striking him. "That's the thing. He only asked for a receipt for the boodle; we can afford to give him that."

"But, don't you think we had better go back at once and fix this? You see, a man who has lost so large a sum of money as this will not be apt to consider the consequences of his action, but, as likely as not, will rush off to Headquarters and report the case at once."

"No hurry," said his friend carelessly. "As I told you, I understand that the old man's visiting hours are usually considerably later than the time we called; so, if we get back by midnight we will be in plenty of time. Meanwhile we'll go to the hotel and count over the swag."

Adair shook his head dubiously.

"You may do as you like," he said; "but my advice would be to go back at once. If we wait until midnight, it will give him ample time to put the case in the hands of the police, and, for aught we know, they will be on our track by that time."

"Oh, to thunder with your foolish apprehensions!" muttered Munson impatiently. "I am not going back, or any place else. I tell you, until I have had a look at this money. So come on, and stop your crying."

Adair knew too well that, when his companion and superior declared himself in this fashion, there was no appeal from his

decision; nor was there any use of pleading with him. So, although he felt extremely uncomfortable at the thought of the possibilities which might grow out of the trick they had played the wily old money-broker, he followed his literal master to the hotel.

On reaching the hotel they procured the key and went directly to their room.

"Now," began Munson, when a light had been struck, throwing himself comfortably into a chair, "we shall have the supreme pleasure of seeing the color and feeling the texture of the old Corkscrew's swag. What will you bet as to the amount?"

Adair thought a minute, and then said:

"I'll bet there is less than fifty thousand."

"Will you bet that there is not over thirty?"

After another pause:

"Yes, blessed if I don't bet there is not over thirty thousand dollars."

"All right," laughed Munson, "I'll go you a fifty that the pile will foot up a cool fifty thousand. I'll do that on the strength of the hint the old villain threw out and the earnestness with which he implored me not to take the wallet."

The amount of the wager was counted out by each man and deposited upon the table, and then Munson said:

"Well, here goes. By Jove! the weight of it would indicate that there was even more than we anticipated. It wouldn't surprise me if there was nearer a hundred thousand than thirty or fifty thousand. But we shall soon see."

And, after hefting the wallet again and instinctively hugging himself with delight, with nervous fingers he unfastened the clasp about the mammoth wallet and threw it open.

The wallet, released from the strap, fairly bulged with its enormous contents, and Munson could hardly contain himself until he had thrust his fingers inside and pulled forth what the wallet contained.

As he did so, his features took on a grave expression.

At length the last of the contents had been extracted and lay in a confused heap on the table.

Then Munson drew a deep sigh and uttered a terrible oath.

"Well, by the Great Horn Spoon!" he muttered, grinding his teeth. "Sold, by the eternal!"

Among all the mass of papers which comprised the contents of the bulging wallet, there was not so much as a dollar bill!

In spite of this disappointment, Adair could not repress a laugh at the expression of hopeless consternation on his friend's face.

Munson was inclined to take umbrage at the other's levity at such a moment, but his rage was transitory, and in another moment the absurdity of the situation flashed upon him also, and he, too, burst into a fit of laughter.

"Well, by George!" he exclaimed, grasping his friend's hand, "that is one on yours truly!"

"Neat little game, though," laughed Adair.

"Yes—for the Jew."

"But, who would have thought or imagined, seeing his abject supplication, that the old scoundrel was playing us a trick like that?"

"Yes, and laughing in his sleeve all the time."

"No doubt of it."

"I wonder," said Munson, with a sudden inspiration—

"What?" caught up the other eagerly.

"I wonder if it is possible that the old villain could have made a mistake?"

"What do you mean?"

"Given us the wrong wallet."

"There is no doubt of it," laughed Adair.

"I mean, a different one to what he thought he was giving us," explained Munson.

"I don't believe it. That old chap knows what he is about, every day in the week."

"What makes me think he might have made a mistake," pursued Munson, thoughtfully, "is the way he took on when I wanted to take this wallet. It is impossible that a man, in imminent danger of his life, should have evinced the terror he did and at the

same time cling to a wallet, at the risk of his life, which contained nothing but a bundle of worthless papers."

"It hardly seems reasonable, I admit; but you must not forget that Corkscrew is a consummate actor, and is never off his guard."

"I'd give a hundred dollars to know the exact truth about it."

"We can find out a good deal cheaper than that."

"By going back?"

"Yes."

"Yes; we shall go back at once," vowed Munson, growing suddenly grave. "And, when I do, I shall make him wish he had never been born, unless he ponies up in good fashion."

"There is one little matter I have been thinking about," interjected Adair, timidly.

"What is that?"

"You remember, the old fellow holds your receipt for ten thousand dollars."

Munson was thunderstruck.

This circumstance had not occurred to him until now.

That the wily Israelite had the advantage of him, there was not the shadow of a doubt. And, the worst part of it was, he (Munson) would not dare to appeal to the authorities to help him out of his dilemma! So, all there was for it, was to hunt up the Shylock and compel him by sheer force to either return the receipt or give him its equivalent in cash.

When a full realization of the true state of affairs burst upon him, the conspirator's brain reeled.

Nor was the loss of the money, or the fact that the Jew held his receipt (which was, in reality, worthless) all that worried him. The thought of him—Monte Munson, the prince of sharpers and confidence men—a man that had never before met his match for finesse and cunning, to be outdone by a greasy old "fence," was humiliating and exasperating in the extreme.

"Come," he said in a stern voice. "Let us be off. Let us lose no time in finding that hoary old scamp, and if he does not do the right thing, there will be a funeral in his family before another day rolls round!"

With that he snatched his hat, and, followed by Adair, soon was upon the street.

They had proceeded some distance before a word passed between them, and then Adair ventured:

"There is one thing I'm afraid of, Munson."

"What is that?" demanded the other impatiently.

"The Jew has another place—or several of them for aught I know—but one that I know of, and it is just possible he may have left the Harlem shanty by this time."

Munson stopped and gazed absently at his companion.

"Do you deem it likely?" he demanded, at last.

"I cannot say that it is likely, but it is possible."

"How do you know he has another place?"

"Because I was there. Indeed, it was at the other place I met the old rogue, before"

"Where is the other place?"

"In Pike street, just out of East Broadway."

"That is nearer than the place in Harlem, is it not?"

"Considerably, and much more easily reached."

"Then there is where we shall go, first. Here! Cab!" he called, as a vehicle was passing at that moment.

The two men entered the cab, and Munson gave the order to be driven to the corner of East Broadway and Pike street.

A rapid whirl down Broadway to Astor Place, across to the Bowery, down that great thoroughfare for a distance, then into one of the cross-town streets to East Broadway, and in twenty minutes from the time they started they were put down at their destination.

But their trouble was far from ended.

Although Adair knew the Jew's place was somewhere near the corner of Pike street, he did not remember the number, and he and his companion had a good deal of trouble in finding it.

At length, however, they discovered the house sought for, which proved to be a dirty suit of rooms on the top floor of one of

the wretched tenements of the neighborhood. But, when they had toiled to the top of the house, groping up narrow, dark and ill-smelling stairways, they found that all their work had been for nothing, as the door was locked and nobody was about.

"There is but one thing for us now," muttered Munson, ill-naturedly, "and that is to drive back to Harlem."

And hastening back to the cab, which they had ordered to wait for them, they were soon on their way up-town again.

"When I do get hold of that sheeney," muttered Munson, "all the trouble he has put me to will but add to the severity of my treatment of him."

"Another bit of trouble may be in store for us," ventured Adair, who seemed to have a penchant for prophesying trouble. "While we are on our way to Harlem he may be on his way here!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SORE DILEMMA.

As it was the wish of Miss Melrose that the whole business connected with the proposed abduction and impersonation of her affianced should be kept from the public, Thad did not report the case to the Philadelphia police, but went quietly to work, single-handed to ferret out the mystery and run down the conspirators.

He realized that he had much to contend with from the start.

In the first place, although he had seen the leader, as he supposed him to be, he did not know his name, and he must trust to luck to run upon a clue to his rendezvous.

The worst of it was, the fellow appeared to have the two great cities as his field of operation, and it was difficult to determine which one would be made his headquarters.

One thing only was certain, and that was that, as the English lord was to land in Philadelphia, a good part of the conspirators' time would necessarily have to be spent in that city.

Thad had secured lodgings at a private hotel in a quiet little street just out of Vine, and began, in an unobtrusive way, to haunt the great hotels, watch their registers and take note of the people who went and came.

Day after day he stood in the lobby of first one hotel and then another, eagerly scanning the face of every guest, visitor, or casual frequenter as he passed in or out.

Thus a week passed, and still no clue to the conspirators had been scented.

At length one evening, about a week after he had begun his reconnoitering, as he was passing out of the lobby of the Belmont House, he passed two men who were engaged in earnest conversation, and he caught the name, pronounced by one of them, of Noddleford.

This, it will be remembered, was the name of the English lord who was to be abducted, and the sound of it caused the detective to start and glance back at the two men.

He could not see their faces, so he turned and followed them back into the hotel.

The men strolled along leisurely, and finally seated themselves upon one of the lobby sofas, still keeping up the conversation, which seemed to engross their whole minds.

Thad strolled back with a careless air, until he was close enough to have a good look at their faces, and then, without appearing to be looking at them, scanned their features minutely.

It did not take him long to see that one of them was Adair, the man he had seen in the car.

Thad cudgeled his wits for an excuse to ask an interview with this man, and finally hit upon one, but he would have to wait until he was at liberty.

In the course of time the opportunity presented itself.

The two men concluded their conversation and parted, and Adair, who it seemed was stopping in the house, was on the point of going up to his room, when Thad accosted him.

"Pardon me," he said politely; "may I have a word with you?"

Adair regarded the detective calmly for a moment, and then replied;

"You have the advantage of me; I do not

know that I ever met you before. What is it you wish to speak to me about?"

Thad, who, it should have been explained, was made up and attired as he was when he called upon Miss Melrose, presented the same card he had given her, bearing the name of Harry Harcourt Lumsden, and then said:

"The matter about which I wish to speak to you is somewhat confidential, and we had better retire to some private place. However, if you have no objection we will sit down here upon one of these sofas."

Without any more ado the young man seated himself upon one of the sofas and awaited the detective to follow his example, and then also waited patiently for him to begin the conversation.

Thad took occasion while going through the operation of taking his seat by the young man of taking another inventory of his face to make sure that he was not mistaken in his man.

Having satisfied himself that he was on the right track, Thad began:

"I believe I am not amiss in addressing you as Mr. Henry Adair, am I?"

"You are perfectly right in doing so," returned the other coolly. "But, as I said before, you have the advantage of me. I am quite sure that I never met you before, and I am surprised therefore that you should know me."

"Ah, sir, you seem to forget that you are a public man—a man whom everybody should know—whom, in short, it is the privilege of every man to know. The actor occupies the position of a magnificent monument. Though he may feel that he is alone in his grandeur, not knowing any of the multitude who gaze with admiration upon him, yet he is dear to the hearts of thousands of whom he has never heard."

Adair bowed and blushed at this compliment, and then asked:

"What do you wish to speak to me about?"

"I will answer your question by first asking you another. Are you acquainted with a lady by the name of Melrose?"

"No, sir, I am not," was the prompt and apparently truthful response.

"You have heard of her, of course?"

"Oh, yes. I could not well have avoided hearing of her, the papers having had so much to say about her in connection with her betrothal to the English lord."

"Tell me, have you never heard of her from any other source except the newspapers?"

"Most likely I have. People are apt to talk about such matters. Why do you ask?"

Up to this time the fellow had received and answered all of the detective's questions with the utmost sangfroid, never for an instant evincing the slightest interest in the matter or showing any concern whatever.

So Thad decided on coming to the point at once and trying the effect of a little reminiscing.

"A week ago to-night," he began, "you took a trip to New York in company with another gentleman—an oldish gentleman—and your mission was to see a certain Jew known by the significant pseudonym of Corkscrew, for the purpose of securing money to carry out a certain scheme. Do you recall anything of this kind, Mr. Adair?"

If Adair's indifference had been intense before, his astonishment at this question was ten-fold more so.

The fellow colored, twisted about uneasily upon his seat, but at length recovered self-control enough to answer:

"I know nothing of what you are talking about, sir. I do not know what you mean."

"Perhaps if I remind you of some further details you will be able to refresh your memory," insinuated the detective.

The fellow moved uneasily, but made no response.

"This is what I meant by asking you if you were acquainted with Miss Melrose. Her name was frequently used in the conversation which passed between yourself and the elderly or middle-aged gentleman that night. Do you recall this?"

"I do not," retorted Adair gruffly. "And now, sir, as it is quite apparent that you

have nothing of relevance to say to me, I shall have to bid you good-night."

With that he abruptly rose with the evident intention of departing, when Thad caused him to hesitate by saying:

"It may be as well, sir, for you to tell me what you know about this matter, as I already have evidence enough against you to make you a good deal of trouble."

"Indeed?" sneered the other. "Well, sir, Mr. Detective—for I have no doubt that is what you are—when you have sufficient evidence to satisfy yourself, go on and do your little work."

He was about to stride away when he appeared to be struck with another idea, for he suddenly checked himself, turned upon the detective and asked:

"By the way, what is the nature of the case in which you happen to have evidence?"

The question had obviously been put for the purpose of satisfying the fellow's mind as to whether Thad was really engaged upon the case in which he was interested, but Thad was determined not to gratify his curiosity to the extent of telling him.

"From what I have already said you will have no difficulty in guessing the nature of the case, especially as you are engaged in it," he replied.

Adair regarded him with a scowl for a moment, appeared to be on the point of retorting several times and as often changed his mind, and finally snapped his fingers defiantly and strode away with a theatrical strut.

The detective watched him to the elevator, and when he disappeared, turned to the clerk's desk and entered into conversation with the night clerk upon some trivial topic. At length he asked in a careless tone:

"You have a boarder here by the name of Henry Adair, I believe?"

"The actor? Yes," replied the clerk. "That is, he has been stopping here for a day or two."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Nothing, except by reputation. You know he was until recently a member of the Arch Street Theater Stock Company, and made quite a hit in the character of Lord Namby, in the play of 'The Younger Son.'"

"You know nothing of the young man's character, then?"

"Only from hearsay. I have heard that he was somewhat dissipated, and a good deal given to gambling."

"Was it on this account that he left the stock company?"

"I believe I have heard something of that kind."

"He appears to have plenty of money, does he not?"

"Yes; at least he occupies one of the best rooms in the house, and pays his bills regularly."

"Hardly consistent with a stock actor out of an engagement, eh?" insinuated the detective.

"No; I have thought of that myself. But I did not know but he might have fallen heir to some money. Anyway, it is none of my business so long as he pays his bills."

"Have you noticed the kind of company he keeps?"

"Well, no, not particularly," reflected the clerk. "I have seen him in company with a number of gentlemen; but they all appeared to be gentlemen."

"Do you recall any of these gentlemen?"

"Well, there was Rodman, the actor, and Sinclair, who is also an actor, and Beach—"

"Pardon me," interrupted Thad. "Who and what is this Beach?"

"I know nothing about him, although my impression is that he is some sort of a broker. He dresses well, and always appears to have an abundance of money."

"You do not know where he lives, I presume?"

"No; although I have no doubt you can find out in the Directory. His name is Albert H. Beach."

"Thank you. Have you ever noticed Adair in company with a middle-aged gentleman, very gray, but rather distinguished looking, and somewhat handsome?"

"Very dressy and dignified? Wears a profusion of very large diamonds?"

"That is the man."

"I guess you must mean Monte Munson."

"Monte Munson?"

"Yes."

Thad reflected.

This was not the name the man had taken when he called upon Miss Melrose, and, indeed, the detective had never heard the name before.

At length he asked:

"What do you know about him?"

"Nothing. I have seen him about for the last six months or so. He always seems to be well supplied with money, and I have got the impression some way that he was a very successful gambler."

"That is about what he is, I guess, or worse. Have you any idea where he stops?"

"I have understood that he occupies a handsome house at the head of Girard avenue. But Beach can tell you all about him."

CHAPTER VII.

OUTWITTED.

ADAIR'S prophecy proved correct, for when he and Munson reached the Harlem shanty it was only to find it dark and tenantless. They returned to Pike street, only to find that the Jew was not there either. A week went by, and a dozen visits had been made, and still no Jew was to be found.

Adair had been twice to Philadelphia, and returning, they had renewed their efforts. Munson was disgusted.

And not having the Jew at hand to vent his spleen on, he turned upon poor Adair, as though he had had anything to do with the affair.

"Well, by Jove!" he muttered, "if there is one thing in this world that you are good for, it is to prophesy bad luck."

"There is no question about that," replied the young man coolly. "But I prophesy truly. You can't dispute that."

"Oh, as to the correctness of your infernal prophecies," growled the other, "I don't dispute that. But why in blazes don't you prophesy something good?"

"My dear friend, when there is anything good in store for us you shall have timely warning of it."

This was uttered with such a degree of earnestness that the outlaw was staggered.

He stared at Adair with a puzzled countenance for a minute or so, and finally said:

"I say, what manner of man are you, anyway? Devil, or angel?"

"That is a question I have been trying myself to find out these many years. But if you want me to prophesy a piece of good news—that is, supposing you would call it good news—if you will return to Pike street now, you will find the Jew."

Munson stared at him with greater astonishment than ever.

"I say," he finally muttered, "have you some sort of a premonition of this fact, or are you just guessing at it?"

For the first time Adair began to comprehend Munson's drift. For the first time he discovered that he was one of the most superstitious men he had ever met, and he concluded to humor his weakness.

"Oh, there is a spirit that comes to me and tells me these things now and then," he said.

"Hanged if I don't believe it," said his companion after another stare. "But we waste time. Let us get back and see if we can find that old rascal."

Another drive of nearly forty minutes brought them back to the Pike street house, and the two conspirators lost no time in mounting the dirty stairs to the tenement of the Jew.

This time, as Adair had predicted, the old man was in and responded with astonishing promptness to their knock.

But when the old chap put his head out and saw who was there he looked as though he wished he had not been quite so prompt. He would probably have closed the door in their faces, for he showed unmistakable signs of being about to do it, but Munson was a trifle too quick for him, and thrust his foot into the door in time to prevent the Jew from closing it, and the next instant grasped the lintel and snatched it open.

Not a word passed on either side, and the

two conspirators pushed past the old man into the room.

Then, when the door was closed and fastened, which Munson attended to himself, the latter turned upon the Jew, and said in a voice tremulous with rage:

"Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?"

The Jew twisted his head, squirmed and rubbed his hands for some moments, grinning and purring the while, and finally broke out into a queer little chuckle.

"Vat's der matter, mine dear?" he said.

"That was a fine trick you played upon me," roared Munson, beside himself with rage.

"Drick!" echoed the Jew, with well-simulated astonishment. "Vat you mean, mine friend?"

"You know well enough what I mean. Where is that money which was supposed to be in that wallet?"

"Oh, mine gracious, mine dear, how should I know? You dook der vallet away mit you mit all der monish v'at der old man vas got already, und now you asks der old man v'are dat monish vas. Merciful Mosches!"

"See here, you old scoundrel!" yelled Munson, grasping the Jew by the collar, "don't you know better than to lie to me any more? Don't you know that I know that there was no money in that wallet, and that you were aware of the fact when you gave it to me?"

"So helup me Mosches, I didn't know it, mine friend," vowed the old man, solemnly. "Are you shure dat you didn't spill dat monish owt on der vay, already?"

"Nonsense! You knew very well that there was no money in it when you gave it to me. Now, do you give me ten thousand dollars in short order, or I shall make it hot for you."

"Mine gracious!" exclaimed the old chap, as if to himself, "vas it possible dat I was made a mistake by dot boocketpook und gif dot shendlemans der wrong von? So helup me Mosches, dot vas a derrible mistake. I would rather find me a t'ousand tollars dan maked dot mistake, already."

"Never mind the mistake. We'll let that pass, provided you get me the ten thousand dollars that I asked for, and for which you hold my receipt."

Munson had no more than alluded to the receipt than he saw that he had made a mistake.

The Jew was not slow to grasp the situation, although he probably had not thought of it before.

His eyes twinkled like those of a serpent when it espies a bird within easy grasp, and he at once began fumbling about his rags, in search of something.

At length he pulled out a slip of paper and held it close to his eyes, and appeared to be trying to decipher its contents.

At length he looked up with a grin and said:

"V'y, dot vas so; I vas got your receipt for ten t'ousand tollars, mine friend. Dot shows dat you vas got der monish already, ain't it?"

"It shows nothing of the kind," roared Munson; "but, if you don't give me the ten thousand in a very great hurry, there will be one less sheeney in the world. Now, get a move on you!"

"I am fery shure dat a shmart shendlemans like you vas not gif a receipt mit his own signature to it unless he vas first got der monish. Ish dot right?"

This was such a complete fulfillment of Adair's prophecy that he was unable to restrain his merriment, and laughed outright, much to the chagrin of his companion. But instead of appearing to notice the insult, he turned upon the Jew with ten-fold vehemence and began to shake him as a dog would a rat.

"No, sir," he fumed, "I'll give you just a minute to procure that money, and if it is not forthcoming in that time you are a dead man!"

"Oh, mine dear friend, it vould gif me der greatest pleasure to gif you der monish if I had it, but der trouble ish all my monish vas in der vallet, if not der von v'at you vas got, den anodder von shust like idt, und it vas by der shanty in Harlem, already."

"Oh, I guess you can manage to scrape

up as much money as that without going to Harlem; at all events I do not propose to leave this house or allow you to leave until I have that ten thousand dollars. And," he pursued, taking out his watch, "your time is just about up. Look out for yourself."

With that he took a firm grip on the Jew's jugular.

The old Jew took one hasty glance at the conspirator's face, and it seemed to satisfy him, for he began to tremble in every limb and make a desperate gurgling effort to speak.

Munson relaxed his grasp enough to allow him to speak, and the old man gasped.

"Oh, for der mercy of Gott, don't gill me! und I vas get you der monish right awav guick!"

Munson took him at his word and released him.

"Well, I'll give you a little more time; but you must not provoke me much further, or you will compel me to do something that I always regret. I never killed a man in my life that I didn't sort of regret it afterward, even if he was only an old sheeney. Come, hurry up!"

The Jew required no more urging this time, and hustled off into another small room opening off of the one into which they had come, and soon returned with a small tin box.

There was a grin on his face now which puzzled the two conspirators, but Adair, with his penchant for prophesying evil, concluded at once that the old fellow had some scheme on foot to defeat their ends.

Munson was also suspicious, and watched his movements closely.

But there appeared no room for suspicion, for he opened the box at once, exposing a stack of crisp bank notes which made the conspirators' mouth water.

He at once lifted out a huge package and began counting off the bills, which were of large denomination, purring, grinning and wagging his old whiskers the while like an old tom-cat gnawing a bone.

"Vere you vas lif, Mr. Munson?" he found time to ask as his dexterous old fingers shuffled off the crisp notes.

"That is my affair," growled Munson. "Attend to your counting, and never mind my affairs."

"You vas bolite, mine friend; but it makes me no difference if you vas lif by dot Girart afeno, Philadelphia, or not. I dond't vas dell der police."

"Attend to your own business, you old dotard, and get that money counted out."

"I vas gounting all der dime. Yoost look by me."

"You needn't tell me that you can count accurately and talk all the time."

"Mine gracious, mine friend! How vas I helup dalking ven you vas dark, dark all der vile by me?"

Adair roared with laughter at Munson's consternation.

"You may as well give it up," he said. "The Jew will have the best of it in the end."

"I guess you are right," growled the other, and immediately lapsed into silence.

The Jew went on with his counting, and in the course of time announced that he had counted out the required amount.

But Munson was not satisfied with this, and was prone to count it over himself, and when he had done so, he declared that there was two hundred and odd dollars short.

This the Jew disputed stoutly, hinting that Munson had secreted some of the money, and then a wrangle ensued which lasted for some time.

At length Munson lost his temper, as usual.

He raved and swore at the old man, and then suddenly snatched up the package of bills which he had just counted over and, thrusting them back into the box, closed the lid, picked up the box and put it under his arm with the cool remark.

"We'll settle this thing right here. I'll take the whole business, and then I shall be sure that I have enough."

With that he started for the door.

Old Corkscrew hastened after him, wailing and screeching for his money.

"Gif me back mine monish!" he moaned.

"It vas all v'at der old man vas got in der world. Gif me back half of it, anyvay."

Oh, mine monish, mine monish. It vas gone. V'at I vas do now?"

But the conspirator's heart was impervious to all appeals, and kept straight on till he reached the door, when he turned and greeted the distracted miser with:

"Good-night, Father Methuselah. Sweet dreams. Let this teach you a lesson, never to try to deceive me again."

And he passed out of the door and down the stairs, followed by Adair, and they could still hear the old man's wailing when they reached the street.

Munson turned to his companion and laughed.

"I guess we got even with the old skin flint that time," he said. "I'll teach him to try to get ahead of me."

Adair drew a deep sigh, and Munson looked at him apprehensively.

"Look here, Hal," he gasped, turning a little pale, "if you prophesy that this box of bills will turn out green paper, blessed if I don't choke you!"

"My dear friend, my prophesying or not will not change the facts," rejoined Adair gravely.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DANGEROUS FRIEND.

WHEN Thad left the hotel, and before seeking his own lodgings, he consulted a Directory for the name and address of Albert H. Beach, and had no trouble in finding it.

As it was too late to call upon the gentleman that night, he went to his lodgings; but at an early hour the following morning, he called at the number indicated in the Directory, which was a long way out on Vine street. Beach, the detective found, was a single man, and only lodged at the place, and had already gone to business. What business he followed, or where it was located, the landlady did not know.

The only thing for Thad, therefore, was to wait and call upon him the coming evening, which he accordingly did.

From the account of him given by Adair, Thad expected to find a man whose villainy exhibited itself in his face; he was surprised, therefore, to find a young man of not more than twenty-five, rather prepossessing in appearance, and evidently of more than ordinary intelligence. Not only this, but he was exceedingly agreeable and received the detective with the greatest cordiality. And when the latter had a chance to study his face, he was loth to believe him a very bad man.

"What did you wish to see me about, Mr. Lumsden?" he asked, examining the card Thad had given him, after the two men were seated in Beach's cozy room on the second floor of the neat dwelling.

"I wish to ask you a few questions with regard to certain people in whom I am interested, and with whom I have been informed you are acquainted."

"I shall be delighted to answer any questions within my power," answered Beach, politely. "Who are the parties in question?"

"The name of one of them is Henry Adair."

"Oh, Hal?" laughed Beach. "I know him very well, as I guess all the boys about town do. What about Hal?"

"First, I would like you to tell me something about his character, if you know it?"

"There is no trouble about that. I guess most any of the boys could have done that. Well, Hal is a wild, harum-scarum lad, in for most anything and the very deuce for poker."

"Has he, to your knowledge, ever been mixed up in anything of a questionable character—anything, for instance, which might come under the general head of what is called crooked?"

"Never. While Hal is dissipated and fond of gambling, which, of course, forces him to do a good deal of 'touching,' that is borrowing, I cannot believe him capable of anything downright dishonest."

"You do not believe that he is weak enough, in consequence of his dissipation and his gambling proclivities, to be led into deeper and more criminal vices?"

"I should hate to believe it."

"What is the character of his associates generally?"

"Mixed," laughed Beach. "A man who is fond of gambling, and follows it up religiously, naturally contracts a motley acquaintance."

"And do you not think it possible that he might be led by some of these doubtful acquaintances, in a moment of weakness or despair, into shady transactions where there was the appearance of gain?"

"I would hate to believe it."

"Still, you admit that such a thing might occur?"

"It might, but I would hate to think so."

"Do you know a man, with whom he associates occasionally, named Monte Munson?"

"Monte Munson?" mused the young man. "Seems to me I have heard the name—"

"He is also known upon occasion as Count D'Arville," interposed the detective.

"Oh, the count," laughed Beach. "Yes, I know him very well."

"What about his character?"

"Really, I don't know much about his character, although I have frequently met him at various resorts, but from all accounts I should judge that he wouldn't scruple very much to turn an honest penny by 'most any method that came uppermost."

"Pardon me," said Thad, waxing earnest, "do you know this man to be an all around crook?"

"No, honestly, I do not know it, of actual knowledge, but as I say, such is my opinion."

"Are you acquainted with a certain Jew in New York, know by the quaint pseudonym of Corkscrew, who makes a business of lending money?"

Thad looked the young man directly in the eye as he asked the question, and the latter flushed somewhat, but smil'd and replied:

"Yes, I know old Corkscrew, and to my sorrow."

"You have had dealings with him, then?"

"Yes, I am sorry to say that I have."

"Would you mind telling me what the nature of the transaction was?"

"Oh, securing some money on certain chattels in my possession, which cost me dollars for every cent, and came very near ruining me besides."

Thad saw that the subject was painful to the young man, and, as the matter did not really concern him he allowed it to drop at this point, and asked:

"I believe you recommended this Count D'Arville to this same Jew, did you not?"

Beach laughed immoderately.

"How did you get onto that?" he asked.

"I heard it accidentally," replied the detective.

"Well, the thing came up like this: The count, knowing that I was to come into considerable money pretty soon, came to me one night when I had been drinking a little too much for my own good, and said that he had a mammoth scheme on the stocks, and wanted me to go into it with him and furnish the necessary capital as an offset for his idea. My brain was a little too much muddled to quite understand the nature of his enterprise, but it was clear enough to allow me to reject his proposition, whatever it was. In the first place, as I told him I would not receive my money in time for him, and if I should have done so, I shouldn't have invested it in anything he was concerned in getting up."

"Still he stuck to me, and hounded me on every occasion of our meeting. I had refrained from asking him the nature of his scheme, but at length one day a little over a week ago, I met him by accident—for I had tried of late to avoid him—he renewed his solicitations, and when he saw that I still refused to enthuse, he said:

"Beach, my boy, you are throwing away the opportunity of your life. Here you have a chance to pull out a cool three hundred thousand on an investment of a petty ten thousand, and you refuse."

"For the first time, my curiosity was sufficiently aroused to ask what the character of his scheme was. In reply he winked slyly, and I believe, was on the point of going into details, but after a little thought, said:

"No, I won't tell you just now. Come round to the St. George and dine with me to-night and I'll lay the whole thing before you."

"I was satisfied then that there was something crooked about the transaction, and it made me furious to think that he should imagine he could inveigle me into a swindling scheme, and I remarked:

"I guess if the truth were known, this scheme of yours wouldn't bear the light of day."

"Instead of getting angry, as I supposed and hoped he would—for I thought that by that means I might get rid of him—he burst into a loud guffaw, shrugged and winked, and followed these with the remark that I was up to snuff, and for that very reason he was anxious to have me for a partner. Then occurred to me a scheme by which I would not only rid myself of him, but repay him richly for the insult he had put upon my self-respect. Affecting to suddenly take great interest in his welfare, I took him by the arm and said in a confidential way:

"I am very sorry, count, that I cannot embark in your enterprise, for the want of funds, but since you have been so good as to offer me this chance to enrich myself, I will reciprocate by putting you in a way to get the necessary funds." I then told him about the Jew in New York, assured him that the old fellow would jump at his proposition, that he had an unlimited amount of cash for just such enterprises, and then directed him so that he would be able to find the money-lender."

"Have you seen him—the count—since?"
"No."

"And do not know what success he met with?"

"I have no idea, but I am satisfied that the wily count met his match for once in his life."

"Now, as you were good enough to direct the count to this Jew, possibly you will be good enough to do the same by me?" said the detective.

"With pleasure," rejoined the young man. "He has two places, one away up-town and one away down-town."

He then directed the detective to the places which have already been visited by the reader in company with Munson and Adair.

"Now, there is just one more question," said Thad, after thanking him for this latest piece of information, "and I shall impose upon your good nature no longer."

"Don't mention it," laughed the other. "I am such a confirmed gossip that I enjoy exposing my friends' vices more than eating any time."

"I have understood that this Count D'Arville lives in grand style somewhere in Girard avenue. Do you know that exact location? I fail to find the name in the Directory."

Beach roared with laughter.

"I am not surprised at that," he replied, "even if you knew what his right name is. And as for his residing in grand style in Girard avenue, he does just as much as I do. That was a story which he circulated on first coming here, and a great many society people believed it, and possibly still believe it; but the boys soon got onto him."

"He has no such residence, then?"

"Certainly not. I guess a good part of the time it would be difficult for himself to tell where he resides."

"Have you no idea where he is stopping at present?"

"Not the least, and it is doubtful if anybody else does."

"You know where Adair is stopping, of course?"

"Why, yes—that is, he told me he was stopping at the Belmont; but if he is, it must be on somebody else's charity, for poor Hal hasn't had money enough to stop over night at the Belmont since I have known him."

"Nevertheless, he is not only stopping there, and has been for some days past, but the clerk tells me he appears to have no end of money. How do you account for it?"

"I do not pretend to account for it, unless the boy has struck luck at faro—he never could have done it at poker; he is too poor a player—or some rich relative has croaked and left him a wad. However, I think I shall have to call upon Hal and see whether he can't return a few of the bills I have slipped him on various occasions."

Thad thanked him for the freedom with which he had furnished all this valuable in-

formation, and was about to take his leave, when Beach, who had followed him to the door, whispered timidly:

"I say, Mr.—er—er—, it's none of my business, and you needn't answer the question if you do not choose to, but aren't you a detective, sir, and on this fellow's track?"

Thad was about to return him an evasive answer, but on looking into his frank, honest eyes, he could not find the heart to do so, and replied:

"Yes; but I trust you will respect my confidence, and say nothing about the matter."

"My dear sir, I shall not only respect your confidence, but I shall do all in my power to assist you."

"Thanks," cried the detective, warmly, turning and grasping the young man's hand. "I sincerely appreciate your friendship, and promise of assistance. I may need it before I get through."

Beach hesitated a moment, and then held something up in his hand, with the remark:

"Here is something—I don't know what it is, or whether it has anything to do with the case, but in your talk you somehow seemed to implicate Adair in the case, and it just struck me that this might lead to something. You may have it, if you can make any use of it."

With that he put the article into Thad's hand. It was a gold medal, about the size of an American half-dollar, with the British arms on one side and the arms of some noble family on the other, accompanied by a Latin motto, and the name "Noddleford."

"Adair dropped it the other night when he was here," explained Beach, "and I haven't seen him to return it since."

CHAPTER IX.

NO DISCOUNT.

It was with great eagerness and some apprehension that Munson returned to the hotel with the tin box under his arm, a little before daylight, having spent the night in running from one end of the city to the other in search of Corkscrew.

Arriving in the room at last and putting the box upon the table, he sighed wearily and muttered:

"Well, I hope there is no flim-flam about the affair this time. If there is, by jingo, Adair, I'll hold you responsible!"

Adair laughed.

"Why hold me responsible?"

"Because I shall take it for granted that you have hoodooed the box."

His friend roared with laughter again.

"Do you take me for a hoodoo?" he asked.

"I begin to think so," growled Munson, "and if the contents of this box turn out to be anything but the clear stuff, I shall be convinced of it."

"I guess you'll find the contents of the box all right."

Munson drew a deep sigh of relief at this assurance, and proceeded to light the gas.

He then threw up the lid of the box with trembling fingers and a palpitating heart.

But when his eyes fell upon the mass of crisp bank-notes within, his countenance took on a more cheerful aspect and his humor was considerably improved.

Adair watched him curiously as he lifted the packages of bills, which were carefully bound up with bits of ribbon, from the box, ran his finger over each package and scrutinized each bill critically.

It was evident that he was still suspicious, and he at last turned to Adair, and said:

"Come and take a look at this stuff, old fellow, and see what you think of it. Blessed if I am quite certain yet that the old rascal hasn't palmed green goods off on us."

"We couldn't blame him much under the circumstances," laughed Adair, as he approached the table, "but I guess the stuff is all right this time, at least it looks like it."

He then set to work examining the bills, taking up package after package and opening it in the center, until he had successively gone over each one which had been in the box.

At length he heaved a sigh, and said:

"There is no discount on that money. If the stuff we get from the heiress is as good as that we shall have no reason for complaint."

"You think it is all good, eh?" gasped Munson gleefully.

"There is no question about it."

"Thank goodness! I feel better now. Now we are in shape for business. But let us get at it and count it."

"Hadn't we better take a sleep first? I'm as tired as a navvy, and I fear that I sha'n't be able to count accurately."

"Accurately enough. You see the bundles all contain about the same amount, and it won't take us long."

"Very well; here goes, then, but I would rather sleep than count money."

The two men set to work, and as Munson had predicted, it did not take them long to complete the job.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Munson, when they were through. "That was a handsome haul. Twenty thousand dollars! No wonder the old Jew kicked at seeing it go."

"It was sort of cruel, not to say dishonest, to take it away from him."

"Pshaw! did he not get it in the same way?"

"I have no doubt he did, still—"

"Then, what is the use of having any qualms over the matter? It is no crime to rob a thief."

"Perhaps not."

"If your conscience troubles you over this matter, what will it do when we scoop the heiress?"

"Oh, it's about as broad as it is long," muttered Adair, sleepily. "The heiress didn't steal the money exactly, but her father did, or what is equivalent to it."

"What do you mean?"

"He made his money in gambling in stocks, and made a pauper for every thousand dollars he possessed. But, this is dry talk. Let me have a pull at that bottle of yours, and then I am going to turn in and sleep the sleep of the just."

"You'll find it in that bag over there."

Adair found the bottle, and, after taking several long pulls at it, undressed and went to bed.

Not so with Munson, however.

Cool, calculating villain that he was, he rarely touched anything of an intoxicating nature; and, moreover, his excitement over the acquisition of so much money all at once, and at so little cost, rendered sleep impossible.

So he sat in his chair thinking, thinking, till the sun arose and shone in at the window, causing the gas to burn dimly, and changing the aspect of the conspirator's surroundings.

Suddenly he aroused himself, jumped to his feet, turned out the gas, and was about to close the tin box containing the money, when an irresistible desire to count the money over again took possession of him, and would not down until he had repeated the task for the third time.

Then, when he had counted it all over again, replaced it in the box, closed the lid and locked it, another feeling seized him.

It was the lust of greed.

He looked at the box, pondered, unlocked it, and looked at the money once more, and then stole a stealthy glance in the direction of the bed where his young companion lay snoring and unconscious.

"Why not?" he muttered to himself. "Why should I share it with him? Of course, if I do the other thing, the million-dollar business will be at an end. But that may fail, while this is sure. I can easily slip away, and he will never find me in God's world, and—no—" he hesitated. "There was that other affair—and she was a woman, and yet she followed me—followed me from one end of the earth to the other—until—"

Again he hesitated and a shudder shook his frame and he glanced instinctively at his hands as if he still expected to find the cursed stain upon them.

"Yes," he muttered again, clinching his teeth and nerving his resolution, "there is but one way—unless I conclude to divide with him—I vowed it before, and swore that it should be my motto—'dead men tell no tales!'"

Here he stole another glance toward the bed.

Adair still slept.

Munson tiptoed to the door, opened it softly and looked along the corridor in each direction.

The corridor was still dim with the shadows of early morning and the gas flickered feebly at intervals along the walls, but not a soul was in sight.

He closed the door as softly as he had opened it, bolted it and looked again toward the bed.

The bed, which was in an alcove of the room, was partly screened in shadow, and only an outline of the sleeper's face could be discerned from where the would-be assassin stood.

Whether it was the chill morning air which had crept in from the corridor when the door was open, or the thought of the foul deed he was about to commit, even he could not have told, but the wretch shivered from head to foot.

He himself did not notice it until he had crept half-way across the room in the direction of the bed, when he paused and drew out the long slender blade with which he had intimidated the Jew, then he noticed that his hand shook as with an ague.

Then he also realized that he shook from head to foot and it annoyed him.

"What can it be?" he pondered. "Have I suddenly grown to be such a coward that I dare not—"

He hesitated, and an additional shudder convulsed him.

"Thunder and fiends!" he muttered. "What has come over me? No, it is not cowardice. I never experienced a qualm of terror in my life. I know what it is. I am not well. Now that I remember it, I haven't slept for more than twenty-four hours. That is it—physical exhaustion. I knew it could not have been spiritual weakness. I have it!"

At this juncture his eyes, in roving about the room, fell upon the bottle which Adair had left upon the table.

Stealing toward it as a cat would creep upon a mouse, he snatched the bottle, put it to his lips and drank long and deep.

"Ah!" he sighed as he put the bottle down upon the table again, "that has the effect. That warms me up and gives me new energy—new life. Now I am ready for anything—fiendish."

His limbs had ceased to tremble and his hand had never been more steady.

He glanced again at the sleeper and began coolly rolling up his sleeve.

The next instant he was gliding toward the bed, his face white with fiendish determination, his jaws set and his eyes glaring at his helpless victim on the bed as a ravenous beast glares at its prey.

At that moment the sleeper moved and uttered a groan as if in pain.

It caused the intended assassin to pause and another shudder asserted itself.

But the villain soon pulled himself together and threw off the weakness which was stealing upon him again.

"A curse upon my weakness!" he muttered. "I'll have none of it, and I shall have the work over with before it has time to come upon me again."

A few hasty strides brought him to the bedside, and he raised his arm and steeled his nerve for the fatal blow.

But at that moment there came a knock at the door.

"Curse the luck!" muttered the assassin. "Why could not they have waited a little longer? I wonder who it is?"

At this juncture the knock was repeated.

"Confound it, what shall I do?" he growled. "I suppose they will keep on knocking till I go to the door."

Here the knock was repeated, and Munson started for the door.

He was on the point of opening it, when he chanced to glance at himself and saw the bare arm and the glittering knife in his hand.

This caused him additional confusion, but he finally managed to put aside the knife, roll down his sleeve and compose himself with fair success.

Then he opened the door.

A bell-boy stood there.

"What is it?" growled Munson, angrily.

"Please, sir, there's a gent down-stairs as wants ter see yer," snuffled the boy.

"Who is it?" asked Munson, with a good deal of apprehension.

"I dunno, sir."

"Didn't he give his name?"

"Oh, yes, sir, here's his card. I like ter forgot."

And the boy handed him a card.

It read, "Mr. Harry Harcourt Lumsden."

"By Jove! I know who that is!"

Munson jumped at the sound of the voice as though he had been prodded with a sharp instrument, and turning, came face to face with Adair, who stood there in his night clothes.

Before Munson had time to recover himself enough to speak the young man continued:

"That is a detective. He is the same chap whom I encountered in Philadelphia the other night."

Munson muttered something unintelligibly, and then turning to the boy again, handed him a five-dollar note with the request:

"Just you tell the gentleman that Mr. Munson and his friend left the hotel early this morning. Do you understand?"

"You bet," chuckled the boy with a knowing wink, and vanished.

"Now, we have got to pack up and get out of here as soon as God will let us," he continued, addressing Adair, as soon as the door was closed. "I wonder how that chap got on to us?"

"Hard telling," replied Adair, yawning.

CHAPTER X.

THAD MAKES A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

As soon as Thad had discovered the whereabouts of the Jew, and considered that the men whom he was tracing had had business with him, he concluded that he had run upon a pretty respectable clue.

So he lost no time in returning to New York, where he arrived late the same night he had had the interview with Beach.

Late as it was, however, he proceeded directly to the Pike street abode of the Cork-screw.

He arrived a few minutes after the departure of Munson and Adair.

Indeed, the old man had not ceased wailing over the loss of his money when the detective put in an appearance.

For that reason he was suspicious and stubborn, and for a long time would not answer Thad's questions.

By degrees, however, the acute detective succeeded in gaining the Jew's confidence, and when he was convinced that his present visitor had no designs upon his money-bags, the old man grew calm and discussed the situation with Thad freely.

"You say these men have just left here?" asked the detective.

"Yes, yes, mine friend. Dey vas no more as swie plocks avay by dis dime, und dey dooked all mine monish. Oh, mine monish! It vas all gone, und I vas nefer see dat monish no more. Vat vas der old man to do, already?"

Thad put no faith in the money-lender's assertion that the conspirators had robbed him, believing that he had invested his money in the nefarious scheme, and now set up this howl to cover up his crime.

"How much did you let them have?" he asked.

"I vas not let dem haf no monish," wailed the Jew. "Dey vas dook it without mine leaf."

"But you had agreed to let them have some, had you not?"

"Yes, I vas acceed to let dem haf ten t'ousand tollars as a loan, but ven dey sees de box vot l gept mine monish in dey vas crap it und run away mit der whole pessness."

"How much did the box contain?"

"More as dwendy t'ousand tollars, mine friend!" blubbered the old man, the tears rolling down his cheeks.

The detective was sure that he was lying now, and in spite of the old fellow's apparent grief—which he believed to be sham—he could not help laughing.

"Come," he said, "that is drawing it pretty strong. Don't tell me that they got away with twenty thousand dollars."

"I dell you dey did, mine friend. More as dwendy t'ousand tollars, all in goot monish."

"And you have not notified the police?"

"Nodify der bolice? Vat goot vas dot do, mine friend?"

"Have the rascals run down and arrested, that is all."

"Der bolice vould no nothing," sneered the old man. "All dey vould do by me vould be to lock me up."

"That convinces me that either you gave them the money, or that you came by the money in such a way that you are afraid to apply to the police."

"No, no, mine friend, you vas make a great mistake. I vas make der monish honest, so helup me Mosesh, I did."

"Very well, we'll let that pass. It makes very little difference to me how you got the money. If these fellows stole it, as you say they did, they should be caught and punished. Now, I want these same chaps on another charge, and if you will aid me to catch them you may yet get your money back."

"Oh, t'anks, t'anks!" gurgled the Jew, ecstatically. "Anyting v'at I gan do, I vas do it vith all mine heart. How I gan assisid you, mine dear friend?"

"Simply by telling me where I can find them."

"Oh, mine gracious! dot vas not an easy ting, mine friend. If I vas knowed vere dose sellers vas, I vas go dere mineselef purty guick, already."

"They gave you no hint of where they were stopping, or where they intended going when they left here, did they?"

"Dey did nodt."

"That is unfortunate. I should have thought that a wily person like you would have tried to find out their place of residence, at the very least."

"Sthobp a liddle!" cried the old man, with sudden inspiration. "Since you vas spoke about it, I remember dat I vas heardt dat dat Munson vas lif by Girart avenoo, Philadelphia."

"That is a mistake," rejoined Thad. "I thought the same thing, but I found out differently. My impression is that they are stopping here in the city, at least Munson."

The Jew shook his head despairingly, and as there appeared nothing more to be learned there, Thad took his leave, giving his card to the old man, and requesting him to let him know the moment he should hear anything which would be likely to lead to a clue.

Corkscrew promised, and Thad left the tenement.

When he reached the street and was walking away, head down, full of thought, he was hailed by some one, and on looking up, espied a hackman whom he chanced to know; who, in fact, had driven him on many a thrilling expedition in connection with his detective work.

The 'Jehu was too wary to call him by name, but simply called out "Hello!" in a peculiar tone which Thad had taught him to use when hailing him under certain circumstances.

As soon as the detective recognized who the man was, he walked quickly to the side of the hack, and silently put out his hand.

"What's up, Mullen?" he asked, in a low tone.

"That was the very question Oi would be askin' yez, sor," replied the hackman. "Oi seen yez comin' out av the thrap, ferninst, an' Oi naturally supposhed there was some thin' in the wind."

"Nothing worth while, Mullen. But what are you doing here?"

"That was another question Oi was about axin' yez, sor. For the lasht wake Oi've been dhroivin' a couple av fares up to Hairlem, an' from Hairlem here, an' thin back again, till Oi do belave the divvil an' all is in 'em. An' now to-night, afther droivin' them up to Hairlem an' back here, and there they've been this hour back, unless they guv me the shlip whole Oi shlept awhoile ago. Did yez see annything av a couple av judes in the joint ferninst, sor?"

"What were they like, Mullen?"

"Wan was an oldish feller, dressed loike a prince an' all, wid the diamonds blazin' an him loike the oyes av Betty Mahoney's cat; and the other chap was younger, and dressed more quoiet loike. He was a shlim little chap, sor."

"No, I did not see anybody of that description; but I know who the parties are, and I shouldn't wonder if you could give me a lift right here."

"How's that, sor?"

"The parties you refer to are a couple of crooks."

"Huroo! D'ye moind thot now? Wal, sor, do ye know I didn't loike the luck o' that ould fellas gob the fuarest time he paid me a fare."

"They have been up-stairs, as you thought," pursued Thad, "and as you suspect, they have given you the slip."

"Gone, sor?"

"That's what they have."

"Bad look till them! That's two fares gone to the divvil."

"Possibly not. Do you know where they are stopping?"

"Faix Oi do; at l'aste, Oi know phwere Oi picked them up aich toime."

"Where?"

"Ferninst the Gedney House, or rather bechune the Gedney and the Meteoropolitan Opery House."

"In Fortieth street, eh?"

"Thot's roight."

"And you picked them up in the same place every evening?"

"Oi did."

"At about the same time?"

"Yis, sor."

"I shouldn't wonder, then, if they were stopping at the Gedney House."

"Oi thought as much mesilf, sor."

"How often have you driven these fellows?"

"A dozen toimes at l'aste, sor."

"Well, as you do not care to wait here any longer, and I believe my best plan is to go to the Gedney House, I'll just take passage with you, if you have no objection, Mullen."

"Not the l'aste, sor," chuckled the driver. "An' it's not the furrest toime we've been out together at all hours av the noight, sor."

"Not by a long shot, Mullen," laughed Thad as he climbed into the vehicle.

"Whoa, Barnicle!" bawled the cabby.

"Air yez all roight there, sor?"

"All right, Mullen. Let her go."

"Get up, Barnicle!" yelled the driver.

"Get a move an yez! Ah, it's well yez know who's roidin' behoind yez, ye ould varmint. Yez nivvir gits thot gait an yez except whin the detective's behoind yez. Git an there, will yez?"

And away they hummed up the street, and in a few minutes pulled up at the corner of Fortieth street and Broadway, and the detective alighted.

"You might wait a few minutes for me, Mullen," said Thad, as he handed up his fare. "I may not be long here, and you can take me home afterwards."

"All roight, sor, at your service, as the flunkey said to the hangman."

It was just breaking day when Thad entered the hotel, and the lobby and office were deserted, except for a few sleeping bell-boys and the night clerk, who was not much better.

The detective did not disturb the weary-looking clerk at first, but quietly twirled the register round and began going over the names of recent arrivals.

But to no purpose.

When he had scanned the dirty pages for a week past, he had still found no trace of the men whom he sought.

He knew that they could not have been there longer than that, so he finally asked the clerk if any such men were stopping there, giving a minute description of them.

The clerk reflected a moment and then replied:

"Yes, there are two men here that suit your description, but that is not the names."

With that he pointed to a couple of names on the register—Jones and Robison.

"Very convenient names, for an emergency," laughed Thad. "Will you please send my card up to them?"

"Rather early," growled the clerk, looking up at the clock. "We don't like to disturb any one so early in the morning. They don't like it."

"Very well, I will wait a short time," acquiesced the detective. "But, as this is an urgent matter, I can't wait long."

This had the effect of arousing the clerk's suspicions, and after surveying the detective for some moments, he asked:

"What's up?"

"Oh, nothing, only these fellows are a little queer, that's all."

"In that case I'll send right up. Or, hadn't you better go up yourself?"

"No, I have no warrant for their arrest, and I am not quite sure of my grounds yet. I will wait half an hour, and then send up. If I can get an interview with the elder man, I think I can settle matters in short order."

Thad then lighted a cigar, and seated himself for a comfortable smoke as he killed the half-hour or so which should elapse before he could send his card up-stairs.

At length the time slipped by, and the card was sent up.

In a little while the boy returned with the report that the two men had left the hotel early that morning.

"That is strange," mused the clerk. "I saw nothing of them leaving."

"And in my opinion they have not gone," said Thad. "Boy, how did you know the gentleman's name was Munson?"

The boy took on a scared look and answered:

"He told me so, sir."

CHAPTER XI.

VAMOOSED.

THAD could not help laughing at the boy for his simplicity in betraying the conspirator who had evidently told him what to say.

"Well," he said, "if he told you that his name was Munson and that he had already left the hotel, it must be true. However, I have my doubts on the latter point, and for that reason I shall just take a run up and see for myself. What is the number of the room, clerk?"

"Sixty-eight, on the fourth floor. Boy, show the gentleman up."

Entering the elevator, Thad was soon on the fourth floor and at the door of Room Sixty-eight.

He gave a sound rap at the door, and listened.

A husky voice, the owner of which must have been very close to the door inside, called out:

"Who's there?"

The detective was about to answer and give the name Lumsden, the same that was on the card, but upon second thought he decided not to, as he remembered that he had given this same card to Adair in the hotel in Philadelphia.

He also saw then that he had made a mistake in sending this card up to the room, but it was too late to think of that now, so he answered:

"The clerk."

There was a moment of silence, and then the same gruff voice demanded:

"What clerk?"

"Why, the clerk of the hotel, of course."

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to speak to you."

"What about?"

"Open the door, and I'll tell you."

Then ensued another long silence, and Thad finally called:

"Hello, in there!"

At the same time repeating the knock.

"Well?" came from the inside.

But it did not seem to be the same voice, and the detective concluded that it must be Adair speaking this time.

"Open the door," he answered, "and I'll tell you what I want."

"All right—in just a second," was the response.

Then after another short silence, he heard the key turning in the lock and the next instant the door opened.

A young man, scarcely more than a boy, stood before him.

Thad had never seen the fellow before, and was surprised to find him, instead of either Munson or Adair, there.

Before asking any questions Thad forced the door a little wider open and peered over the young man's shoulder into the room.

And to his utter astonishment there was not another soul in the room.

Thinking the boy had made a mistake and showed him the wrong room, he first turned to look for the boy, but seeing that he had already gone, he glanced at the number on the door.

No, it was the number the clerk had given him.

Then a suspicion flashed through his mind that perhaps the clerk was into the conspiracy, and had given him the wrong

number intentionally for the purpose of giving the rascals a chance to get out of the way.

All this had flashed through the detective's mind in the fraction of a minute, and then he turned to the young man, who still stood waiting for him to speak.

"Where are the others?" he asked.

"What others?" inquired the young man, innocently.

"Munson and Adair. Were they not in this room?"

"I know nobody of that name. There is nobody here but me."

"But they were here a little while ago."

"That is funny," laughed the young man. "I have spent the night in this room and you are the first person I have seen since coming into it."

Thad was dumfounded!

The young man looked honest and he spoke like an honest man.

What could be the meaning of it?

Without another word, he turned and walked to the elevator and was soon down in the office again.

By this time the day clerk had come on, and he addressed him.

"Who is stopping in Room 68?" he asked.

The clerk referred to the register, and then answered:

"Jones and Robinson."

"But," objected Thad, with a puzzled countenance, "I have just been up there and found another party in that room, and he told me that he had occupied the room all night and that nobody else had been there but himself."

"Oh, well, in that case, perhaps the parties left last night and the night clerk put somebody else in there, and forgot to make a note of it."

"That cannot be, for I sent up my card by one of the bell-boys not half an hour ago, and he came back with the report that the men I was after had left early this morning, and when I asked the boy how he knew that they had gone early this morning and that the name of the man to whom I sent the card was named Munson, the boy answered that the man had told him so."

The clerk laughed, and said:

"That does look a little queer, but I don't know anything about it. Which boy was it?"

But when they came to look about for the boy, it was discovered that he, having belonged to the night-watch, had gone off.

Thad was sorely puzzled, but he was determined not to give the matter up until he had learned something more about it, so he again took the elevator and went upstairs.

Again the same young man came to the door in response to his knock, and the detective said:

"Young man, you will excuse me, but I would like to have a look about this room. I am a detective, and the men I mentioned to you must have been in this room."

"Come right in," said the young man cordially, opening the door for him to enter.

Thad walked inside and glanced about the room.

About the first thing that his eyes fell upon was a black bottle on the table.

There was also a tin box on the table.

He approached the table and lifting the bottle, uncorked it and smelt of its contents.

The smell was that of whisky, of which liquid the bottle was about a quarter full.

"Been having a good time?" he asked, turning to the young man.

For the first time the fellow exhibited signs of embarrassment.

He flushed to the roots of his hair, stammered, but could make no reply.

"I am surprised that a young man like you should have a bottle of whisky in his room," pursued the detective, following up his advantage. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, drinking whisky!"

"I don't drink, sir," faltered the young man growing more and more confused.

"Then what is this whisky doing here?"

"I dunno, sir."

"You don't know?"

"No, sir."

"And yet you say that you have occupied the room all night?"

"Yes, sir."

This was uttered in a weak, tremulous tone and with eyes cast upon the floor.

"Was it in the room when you came in?"

"Ye—yes, sir."

"Very plausible story. However, we'll let that pass."

Thad then examined the tin box.

It was empty, but on the lid was scrawled the name, "Hermann Blitzstein."

"Who does this box belong to?" asked the detective.

"I dunno," replied the young man.

"Was that also in the room when you came in?"

"Yes—sir."

"Well, I guess you have told me the truth about this and the bottle—that is, so far as their having been in the room when you came in is concerned, for you did not come into the room more than half an hour ago."

The fellow hung his head.

"Now, tell me the truth. How long have you been in this room?"

"Since—last—ni—night," the fellow faltered.

Thad walked up to him and took him by the shoulder in no gentle manner, and the chap began to tremble violently.

"Look here, young man," he began, "do you want to go to the police station and be locked up?"

"No—no, sir," he stammered, scarcely able to speak for fright.

"Well, then, you had better tell me the truth. When did those men leave this room, how did they leave it, and when did you come in? Tell me the exact truth, and you shall not be harmed; but if you do not I shall take you to the station-house and lock you up. You will then be taken before a magistrate for examination, and you will have to tell the truth."

This did the work.

The young man broke down and began to cry.

"Please don't take me to prison," he sobbed, "and I'll tell you everything."

"Well, go on."

"I didn't know I was doing anything wrong—"

"Perhaps not, but tell me what you know, and not why you did it."

"I was passing along the corridor, when I seen the bell-boy comin' away from here, and he had a new fiver in his hand, and a grinnin' like anything, so I knowed there was somethin' up, and asked him where he dropped onto the dough. He pointed to this door and grinned more than ever, and then he said, said he:

"If ye'll go there and knock, mebbe they'll give you one."

"I'm a poor lad, sir, doin' odd jobs about fer a livin', and so I thought I wouldn't mind makin' a fiver as easy as that, and so I comes and knocks at the door. The feller inside says 'who's there?' and I says, 'a boy.' Quicker'n a wink, sir, an old feller opened the door and pulls me in."

"Then what did he do?" interposed Thad.

"Why, he hands me a fiver, and says, 'now go out there and watch that hall till we git to the rear elevator, and then bounce into this room quicker'n scat, and if anybody comes up, keep 'em waitin' as long as possible.' They seen that I was puzzled to know what they was up to, so the other chap, a younger man, says, 'Ye see,' he says, 'there's a chap that's always botherin' me and my pardner, worryin' money and all that sort o' thing, see, and we want to give 'im the slip.' So I thought it was all right, and done as they told me."

"You are not so much to blame under the circumstances, if what you have told me is the truth, and I have no reason to doubt it, but what sort of looking men were they?"

"One was an oldish man with gray whiskers and hair and dressed elegant, and the other was a younger man and wore his hair something like an actor."

"Those are the chaps. Well, I'm sorry I did not get here a little sooner."

Thad took another look at the tin box and then the Jew's story of the twenty thousand dollars, which he remembered Cork screw said was in a tin box recurred to him, and he had no doubt that the name on the lid was that of the money-lender.

But the conspirators had been careful to

remove all the money before taking their departure.

The detective made another survey of the room, but finding nothing worth while, was about to leave it, and then he noticed that the boy had slipped away.

Thad, before going, pulled down the covering of the bed, and was surprised to see that it had been occupied by but one person.

This puzzled him a little, but he was about to turn away, when something lying on the coverlet attracted his attention.

Picking it up he found it to be a scrap of paper with something written on it. It read:

"Seventh street, cor. Vine, Philadelphia, Saturday night."

CHAPTER XII.

A HOT SCENT.

THE handwriting on the paper was evidently that of a very ignorant person, which precluded the idea that it had been written by either of the conspirators.

There was no signature to it, but the detective could not but believe it bore some significance to the conspiracy, so he put it into his pocket.

He knew the location, Vine and Seventh street, to be a very tough neighborhood. In fact, one corner was occupied by a low dive, and he concluded that the conspirators had employed or intended to employ, some of the thugs to be found in that locality to assist them in their conspiracy.

As this was Saturday, therefore, he decided at once to be at the place specified in the note that very night, on a venture.

Returning home, Thad took breakfast, and then went to his "studio" as he called it, to prepare for his trip.

The forenoon was already pretty well spent, and as he had a great many details to look after, it was along in the afternoon before he was ready to start.

He had made himself up as a sailor, but put a couple of other costumes and makeups in his satchel in case of an emergency.

It was after seven o'clock when he reached Philadelphia, but as he did not expect the parties at the resort in question till somewhat later, he strolled about the streets to kill time until about nine.

He had registered at a cheap hotel in Seventh street, and left his satchel there, and about nine o'clock strolled into the place on the corner of Vine, which was a free and easy, frequented by all sorts of people, and kept by a man by the name of Lew Simmons.

The place was already pretty well filled with a choice collection of various types of humanity, from fairly respectable looking men to the lowest slum-gullions to be found anywhere.

Everybody was drinking or smoking, or both, and the room was already blue with tobacco smoke.

The place was in the basement, which rendered the atmosphere the more vile.

At one of the rooms, which was oblong, was a raised platform and upon this stood a wheezy old piano.

A bald-headed man with a red nose and general hectic complexion sat at the piano when Thad entered, and he had not sat there five minutes when another man, a consumptive-looking chap, also seated himself on the platform near the violin, and began tuning a violin which had a voice like an asthmatic cat.

Presently a tough looking young fellow with fiery red hair clipped close to his head, and a jaw like a chimpanzee, swaggered upon the platform, which elicited an uproarious applause from the audience, and cries of:

"Bully fer youse, Mulligan! Give us a song!"

"Hully gee! but he's a bute since he got out!"

"Go ahead, Mickey, and give us somethin' peppery, dat's de bloke. See!"

And numerous other similar expressions of approval.

Then the man at the piano ran his fingers over the keys, causing it to moan pitifully, and the chap with the violin began to torture his instrument into shrieks of agony, and the young man with the red hair set up a howl, which was supposed to be a song.

but only had the effect of setting the detective's nerves tingling painfully.

Between the singing, the heavy atmosphere and the coarse talk about him, it was a pretty tough siege to remain in the place, but it was necessary, and he grinned and bore it.

Meanwhile, he kept his eyes open for newcomers, as he saw nothing of either of the conspirators when he entered.

More than an hour passed, and still nothing was to be seen of them.

Thad had sat at one table for some time, and had ordered a drink (which he emptied under the table), which he was supposed to do for the privilege of sitting there.

At length he got up and moved to another table.

This he did because there was a noisy crowd of russians at the next table to it, and he hoped that the conversation they were carrying on might lead him to a clue of some kind.

There were six men at the table, all of the very roughest character imaginable.

They were excitedly discussing something, the nature of which the detective could not make out for some time.

At length he overheard a remark which caused him to cock his ear the more attentively.

The speaker was a sailor, and he said, in answer to something else which had been said:

"I tell ye it won't be nec'serry to go out furder than w're the pilot touches 'er, and then if the count kin fix it up with his lu'dship, we kin fetch 'im off in the yacht, and there'll be an end on't."

This had the effect of arousing a good deal of opposition, it seemed, for a terrific wrangle ensued, in which it was impossible to catch a complete sentence of any kind, or to make out what any one was saying.

Indeed, it looked for awhile as if there would be a fight, and doubtless there would have been, had not something occurred to prevent it.

A middle-aged man with white beard strode up to the table with a brisk step and struck the table with his fist.

This caused every man of them to look up simultaneously, and instantly there was a profound silence.

The man wore a long cloak, the collar of which reached his ears, and a slouch hat pulled down over his eyes, so that between cloak and hat Thad could see nothing but the tip of his nose and the white beard.

But the latter was sufficient to satisfy him that the man was no other than Munson.

As soon as he had commanded silence, the new-comer sunk gingerly upon the very edge of a chair which stood near the table, leaned his elbows on the table and began in a confidential tone, which, however, could be distinctly heard by the detective

First he gave a hasty glance about the table and, apparently satisfying himself that all was right, gave out the words:

"Am I caught?"

To which the six men responded in chorus:

"Sly fox never gets caught."

At least, that is what they intended to say, and some of them did make out to say it, but most of them ended the sentence with either "ketched" or "cotch."

Munson appeared to be fully satisfied, and continued:

"Now, boys, the pigeon will alight some time Wednesday; therefore it will be necessary to be ready Wednesday morning. Meet me at five o'clock at the corner of Chestnut and Juniper streets. I will be in the portico of the Mint, and I will have a closed vehicle there ready to take us to the place of embarkation."

"Where'll that be?" asked one of the russians.

"That you will find out all in good time," retorted Munson sternly. "It is not necessary to mention it here."

"How fur out ye goin', count?" inquired another in a harsh voice.

"That is also unnecessary to mention at present. These details can be settled after we are aboard and there are no spies about."

With that the conspirator glanced around and stared at Thad in a manner that made him almost believe the fellow knew him. But the detective was looking in another direction

and was apparently so absorbed in the singing on the platform, that if Munson had had a suspicion, it must have vanished at sight of the innocent face.

Munson then turned his attention to his allies again, and continued:

"Now, I want no failure—I will have no failure under any circumstances. The man that goes back on me, remember, may as well go and jump into the Delaware River at once. I want every one of you to be on hand, and I want you to come sober. If any man shows up with the least signs of liquor on him, he will be promptly dismissed. Do you all understand?"

There was a chorus of affirmative grunts, and then the conspirator took a large wallet from his pocket, from which he extracted a thick package of bills, and proceeded to distribute one of the bills to each of the six men.

Thad could not guess the denomination of the bills, but his curiosity was soon satisfied on that score, for Munson said:

"There, boys, is ten apiece. When the work is done you will each get forty more, making fifty in all."

Another chorus of grunts expressed the men's gratitude for the money, and the conspirator replaced his wallet in his pocket and arose from the table:

"Now, boys, remember," he reiterated; "be faithful, and you will be rewarded; but if any of you fail, woe be unto you."

So saying, he walked briskly out of the room.

Thad also arose and glided quietly and unconcernedly after him.

Munson had barely reached the street when the detective was close upon him.

He could easily have arrested the fellow, had he had a warrant, but as he had not, his only course was to shadow the conspirator, learn where he could be found when wanted, and then procure a warrant for his arrest.

He had already collected sufficient evidence against the fellow to justify him in taking this move. But when he came to turn the matter over in his mind, he decided that it would be better, after all, to wait till he had the whole crowd together, including Adair, in the back, to have a squad of policemen on hand, and take them all in together.

While these thoughts were rapidly flitting through the detective's mind, Munson had summoned a cab and got in.

Thad looked about, and seeing another cab standing on the corner of the street, he hastened to it, engaged it, and, pointing to the other cab, which was just driving away, instructed the driver to keep it in sight, but not to drive too close, lest he might arouse the occupant's suspicions that he was being followed.

This was all quickly arranged, and Thad's vehicle was soon in pursuit of the other one.

The foremost cab drove along Seventh street till it came to Broad street, and turning into this, continued along it to Twenty-third, and turning the corner, went a distance of a block, and stopped in front of a splendid mansion, and the conspirator alighted and went in.

Thad made a note of the number, as soon as the man had disappeared inside, and then re-entered his cab and drove back to the cheap hotel, where he only remained long enough to exchange his clothes and make-up for something more genteel and his natural self.

He then left the place and returned to his own hotel, which was a quiet and respectable place.

It was still scarcely past ten o'clock, and when he entered the office the clerk informed him that there was a gentleman waiting to see him.

He did not say who the gentleman was, and Thad was a little curious, not to say anxious, to see who it could be.

So he lost no time in getting up to the sitting-room, where the caller was waiting, and was surprised to find that it was Beach.

"I am glad to see you," cried the detective, grasping the young man by the hand. "What brings you here?"

"Something that will interest you, I hope," replied Beach, after returning his greeting very cordially.

"What is it, pray? Something connected with our case?"

"That is it, exactly."

"In that case, we had better adjourn to my room, where we will run no risk of being intruded upon or overheard."

"Yes, I think we had better be in private," answered Beach.

When they had reached the detective's room, and Thad had closed and locked the door, the two men seated themselves, and then the detective asked:

"Well, have you heard anything new?"

"Yes—at least, I presume it will be new to you."

"What is it?"

"I have discovered the plan of operation of these conspirators."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PLOT.

WHEN Thad had heard this much of the young man's revelation he was at once deeply interested.

"You have learned their plan of operation, have you?" he said.

"Yes, and by the merest accident."

"How was it?"

"I was over to New York yesterday, and by the merest coincident stopped at a house where Munson and Adair were stopping, and what was still more curious, got a room adjoining theirs."

"Then you haven't been home long?"

"Just returned this afternoon."

"So did I," said Thad. "You stopped at the Gedney House, then?"

"How did you know?" asked the other in surprise.

"I traced the parties there. But let us hear about the plot."

"Well, as I say, I got the next room to them, and hadn't been in my room long before I heard talking in the next room. It seemed that the speakers were not particular about keeping their conversation secret, for from the beginning I could hear nearly every word they said. One reason for this was that there were folding doors between the two apartments, or rather, the two apartments both belonged to one suite. As soon as they commenced talking I recognized the voice of Adair, and, although I am not in the habit of eavesdropping, under the circumstances I did not consider that there would be much harm in listening.

"I shall not attempt to give their conversation in their exact words; in substance this is what it was: On Wednesday some time they, with an escort of thugs, are to take a yacht and run out in the direction of the Delaware breakwater, and when the incoming steamer slacks speed to allow the pilot to come aboard they intend running alongside and by some excuse, getting aboard. The count has provided himself with a letter of introduction to Lord Noddleford, and this he will present to the gentleman and secure an interview. If this works satisfactorily, he will inform his lordship that it is the request of his lordship's affianced that he should quit the ship at this point and come ashore on the yacht. He has provided himself with a letter from the lady making this request. The excuse they will offer will be that certain parties, anarchists and the like, are watching for his lordship with evil designs upon his person, and that they, Munson and Adair, are the agents for a certain protective association, whose duty it is to look out for the welfare of the scions of nobility visiting this country. Once aboard the yacht, they can do what they please with the lord and have nobody to answer to for their actions."

"I have heard a portion of this already," interposed the detective. "But how do they propose to work the part of the programme where Adair is to impersonate his lordship?"

"I was coming to that," hastened the young man. "The whole operation is to be conducted with so much secrecy that the ship authorities will know nothing about it. When his lordship leaves the vessel it will be in the guise of Adair in his clothes, in fact—while Adair will remain in his lordship's state-room and go ashore in the lighter with the rest of the passengers."

"Quite a clever scheme," smiled the de-

tective, "but I fancy I have one quite equal to it."

"Indeed? Then you are prepared?"

"I should think I was."

"What is your plan?"

Thad was surprised at the question, and for the first time a vague suspicion crossed his mind that the young man was not all that he had at first imagined him.

Then he recalled what Adair had said about him in the car, that he was no better than the Jew money-lender.

But when he came to look once more into the fellow's open countenance and frank eyes, he still could not impute treachery to him.

And then Beach, apparently reading the detective's thoughts to some extent, hastened to say:

"I beg your pardon. I did not realize the impertinence of the question when I asked it. It is none of my business, of course, and I had no right to ask it."

After a moment's thought, Thad answered:

"You can readily understand that it is of the utmost importance that we detectives should keep our plans to ourselves. I would not so much as tell my wife what my modus operandi is to be."

"I understand, and it was thoughtlessness on my part. You need not explain a thing to me."

"I have no doubt whatever that I would be safe in revealing everything to you, Mr. Beach, but there might be one chance in ten thousand that you would let some part of it slip, and as everything depends upon secrecy you cannot blame me for not telling you anything of my future plans."

"That is true," said the other in the politest manner, but Thad imagined his politeness as well as his cheerfulness was forced.

And then rising to take his departure, Beach said:

"Well, as that is all I have to tell, I will take up no more of your time. Good-evening."

"I hope you will not hurry off, my young friend," implored the detective, taking his hand. "Sit down and let us smoke a cigar and have a friendly chat."

"I am obliged to you," returned Beach dryly. Thad thought; "but I am in the habit of keeping early hours, and it is growing quite late. Good-night."

"Good night—if you must go. But I would have enjoyed your company very much. And I thank you exceedingly for furnishing me with this information."

"Don't mention it," said the young man stiffly, and hurried away.

"What does this mean?" mused Thad, after the fellow had gone. "Did I offend him to such an extent as to incite this conduct, or is he mixed up with the conspirators, and was disappointed in not obtaining the information he expected? If the latter is the case, what he told me regarding these fellows' plans may all be fiction after all. At all events I shall not put too much store by it, and I shall keep my eyes on this fellow."

For the next few days—until Wednesday, in short—Thad had little to occupy him.

He paid occasional visits to the Belmont House in the hope of catching a glimpse of Adair, but, although the clerk informed him that the young man was still stopping there, he was never lucky enough to catch him in.

He also called at the house in Twenty-third street several times, but was always informed that Munson—or the count, as they called him—was out.

At length Wednesday came.

The detective had already provided himself with a warrant for Munson and Adair, and was on hand at the Mint corner of the street long before five o'clock in the morning.

He had obtained an escort of a dozen policemen, whom he stationed in the shadow of an archway near the corner of Juniper street on the opposite side of the street from the Mint, while he stationed himself in the shadow of one of the huge pillars on the portico of the Mint itself.

Here he waited till five o'clock, till half past five, till six, and until seven, but no sign of the conspirators was to be seen.

Then he realized that he had either been sold, or that they had in some mysterious way discovered his plot and changed their place of meeting.

There was but one thing, therefore, to be done, and that was to look up the pilot who was to meet the steamer and make arrangements to go out with him.

So, dismissing his escort of police, the detective hurried with all possible speed to the Delaware dock where the various pilot boats were moored, and, after a good deal of inquiry, found out which one was going out.

Up to this time the incoming steamer had not been sighted from the Delaware Breakwater, and the pilot did not start out until he had received the signal that the vessel had been sighted.

Meanwhile Thad had seen the pilot and made arrangements to go out with him.

At length the signal arrived.

It was a little after noon, and as the steamer was still more than fifty miles away, it would be several hours before she would reach the point where the pilot boat would meet her, and consequently it was late in the afternoon before the boat left her moorings.

Thad did not deem it necessary to take any escort, as his work would depend entirely upon diplomacy instead of fighting.

An hour after leaving the dock the little pilot-boat, at a distance of about five miles out, ran alongside of the great steamer.

Thad watched in vain for the conspirators' yacht.

It was nowhere to be seen.

What could it mean?

Had the conspirators become frightened and abandoned the project, or would they board the ship later on?

The detective went aboard with the pilot, the health officer and a few others who had come out to meet friends.

It was not until he had got aboard that he realized that he had neglected one important detail in his preparations, and that was to provide himself with a letter of introduction from Miss Melrose to Lord Noddleford, and he was in something of a quandary as to how to approach the gentleman.

At length, however, he made up his mind to go at it boldly, and so sent his card to the lord's state-room accompanied with a request for an interview.

To his agreeable surprise, his lordship responded promptly, inviting the detective to come at once to his state-room, that he would be delighted to see him.

When Thad reached the state-room Lord Noddleford received him with profuse hospitality, wrung his hand with surprising warmth and insisted upon him sharing a bottle with him at once.

The first thing that impressed Thad was the remarkable resemblance between his lordship and the actor, Adair, and he congratulated himself upon having got his lordship under his wing, so to speak, before the conspirators had a chance at him, as, with this remarkable resemblance to assist them, they would have had little difficulty in carrying out their nefarious scheme of palming off the actor for the lord.

As soon as they were settled down in a comfortable way Thad informed his lordship of the plot against him and the nature of his (the detective's) visit to the steamer.

"This is indeed kind of you," gushed his lordship. "What—aw—could have induced you—aw—to take so much interest in me, me dear fellah?"

"Simply a matter of duty," replied Thad. "It is entirely within the lines of my profession, and I deserve no credit, except, perhaps, for having discovered the plot in time. But even that was mere accident. Any one might have done the same thing."

"But, me dear fellah, it was awfully good of you, doncher know. And I must say, doncher know, that you fellahs—that is you—aw—detectives, over neah, must be devilish vigilant, much more so than on the othah side, doncher know. I'm suppised at this—in so new a countwy, doncher know."

"Oh, we try to do our duty," replied Thad modestly, "but we have our faults as well as the rest of humanity."

"Yaws," drawled his lordship. "By the way, Mistah—Mistah—"

"Burr," prompted Thad.

"Mistah Burr—yaws. I cawn't ever re-

member names, doncher know. But what I was about to awsk was, when did you see me-fiance? Foh I pwesume you have seen hub?"

"Yes—I met her once—about two weeks ago."

His lordship, who, Thad began to think, was about as near an idiot as any man he had ever met, giggled and rubbed his hands like a boy who had been promised a pair of skates or a trip to the circus for the first time.

"Tell me, me dear fellah," he chuckled, "what is she like? A weal, wegulah angel, isn't she?"

"Well, I can't say that she is exactly that, partly for the reason that my acquaintance among real angels has been limited; but Miss Melrose is certainly a charming woman and worthy of any man's efforts to win, aside from her money."

"But that's the main point, doncher know," giggled his lordship. "She's wic—wic as a Jew, and I'm to have hawf she's got, doncher know."

CHAPTER XIV.

A SURPRISE.

As soon as the lighter landed the detective and his noble charge on the dock, they took a carriage and drove, at his lordship's request, to the Belmont House.

Thad counseled against this move, as, knowing that Adair was stopping there, he knew that it would give the conspirators a second opportunity of carrying out their scheme.

But Noddleford would hear to nothing else, and, by way of conciliation, insisted upon the detective also taking rooms at the house, in close proximity to the suite, so that he might be able to watch over him in the event of a second attempt at abduction.

Thad finally consented to this, and then his lordship said:

"I shall also require your assistance in introducing me to Miss Melrose."

This was a great surprise to the detective, who asked:

"How is that?"

"Why, she has nevah met me, doncher know, and, in order to pwevent any chawnce of accident, we awwauged a little ruse between ouahselves some time ago. I sent Miss Melrose a medal, which she was to weturn to me, and I was to weah it on meetng hub, and, as she had already seen the medal, she would wecognize it, and consequently me. But the deuce of it is, I nevah weecived the medal back, doncher know."

Thad then recalled the medal which Beach had given him, which the latter had told him Adair had dropped, and wondered if it could be the same to which his lordship referred.

"What was this medal like?" he asked.

"It was a gold medal, about the size of a gold sovereign, doncher know," explained Noddleford, "with the Bwitish ahms on one side and me own ahms on the othah, with me family motto, '*Fortes fortuna juvat.*'"

"Then, I guess I can help you out."

"What?" gasped his lordship.

Thad took the medal from his pocket and handed it to the Englishman.

"Ba Jovel!" he ejaculated. "How in the name of wondah did you get hold of it?"

The detective related the circumstances of his coming in possession of the medal, and concluded with:

"The wonder is not so much as to how I got hold of it, but as to how it came in this fellow's possession."

"It is stwange, ba Jovel" pondered the lord; "but I suppose it's a paht of the plot, doncher know."

"With that, it will not be necessary for me to introduce you to the lady, I presume?"

"No, I shall get on now, thanks."

They at length arrived at the hotel, where his lordship's man had already secured a suite of apartments, and his lordship was not satisfied until he had provided Thad with an apartment adjoining the suite.

As may be supposed, it was late at night before they reached the hotel, although some of the Englishman's retinue had remained behind to look after the "luggage," as he called it, and he and the detective soon afterward parted, each going to his own apartments for the night.

Thad slept rather late the following morning, and knowing that his lordship would do the same, he did not presume to call upon him until afternoon luncheon.

Then, to the detective's surprise, he found that the Englishman had already gone.

And when he came to inquire at the office, he was still more astonished to find that he had left the hotel, bag, baggage, servants and all.

Then for the first time Thad began to suspect that something was wrong.

He was about to express his opinion to this effect, when the clerk forestalled him with the remark:

"What's Adair up to, now?"

"Adair?" gasped Thad.

"Yes—you ought to know him, as you came here with him last night, you know."

"I did nothing of the kind," retorted the detective. "I came here with—"

The clerk laughed.

"I know," he interrupted. "He fooled the night-clerk too, although he has known him for years. It was a pretty clever dodge. Just like Hal, though; he is always up to some mischief. But I wonder where the real Lord Noddleford went?"

Thad had no response to make.

He saw through the whole ruse now—when it was too late—but he was too much crestfallen to explain the nature of his own defeat to this gossiping clerk.

With a heavy heart and a swimming brain he returned to his room to consider the best move to make next.

Meanwhile he was sorely puzzled to understand how the fellow had managed to get aboard the ship in advance of himself.

He was not long in making up his mind what course to take first.

The first thing to be done was to call upon Miss Melrose, and, if he should be so fortunate as to precede the rascal Adair, he might yet prevent any great harm at the hands of the wily schemer.

So he lost no time in attiring himself in the manner he had appeared to the lady before, and, taking a hark, was soon driven to her residence.

She was delighted to see him, and he had hardly got inside the drawing room when she exclaimed gleefully.

"Oh, you should have come a few minutes sooner, Mr. Lumsden! He has just left here—not more than ten minutes ago!"

"I only wish I had been ten minutes earlier, then," groaned the disguised detective, as he sunk into a seat.

"Oh, I so wish you had!" she went on enthusiastically. "And he's just wrapped up in you. It was so kind of you to go aboard ship and see that he landed in safety, Mr. Lumsden."

Thad shrugged significantly.

"Yes, it was kind of me," he muttered, "too kind, I'm thinking. I wish I hadn't been quite so kind."

"Why, what on earth do you mean, Mr. Lumsden?" cried the girl, noticing his demeanor for the first time.

Thad hesitated a moment, and then said:

"Before answering your question, Miss Melrose, let me ask one of you."

"Yes?" she gasped, fearily.

"Have you made over the money to this man yet?"

She stared with a bewildered countenance at the detective for a moment, and then answered:

"I have signed the necessary papers. Why do you ask?"

"My God! and will he be able to get possession of the money, do you think?"

"I presume so. That was my intention when I signed over the papers. You see, his lordship is not very well off in this world's goods and as I knew he would need a good deal of money before our marriage, I was anxious to let him have it at once."

"This is terrible!" groaned the detective, "and to think that it is all my fault. To think that I, after having ample warning—was even in possession of a clue to their every movement—should have allowed this thing to have occurred. I never made such a blunder in my life—never."

The girl looked bewildered in earnest now.

"Why, what on earth can you mean, Mr. Lumsden?" she cried.

"I mean," groaned Thad, almost beside

himself with mortification and disgust, "that the man whom you saw, and to whom you have signed over a good part of your fortune, is not Lord Noddleford at all."

"Impossible!" gasped the girl.

"True, nevertheless."

"But I know it was his lordship."

"And I know it was nothing of the kind—if you will pardon me, Miss Melrose—but the scamp whom I told you about, Henry Adair, the actor."

"You may imagine so, Mr. Lumsden," she said with a commiserating smile, "but I have sufficient proof to satisfy me that it was and could be no other than his lordship."

Thad guessed what she was about to allude to but asked:

"What is your proof, Miss Melrose?"

She lifted a medal which hung about her neck, and which the detective hadn't noticed before, and said:

"This."

Arising and approaching her sufficiently close to satisfy himself that it was the same, he smiled and rejoined:

"Yes, I have seen that before."

"Oh, he showed it to you, did he?"

"No, I gave it to him."

"Eh?"

"Let me e-plain, Miss Melrose, and I think you will cease to have any doubt about this fellow to whom you have signed over your money is an impostor."

He then related the circumstance of how he had come in possession of the medal, and of his giving it to the man whom he had mistaken for Lord Noddleford.

"Now, allow me to ask," he said in conclusion, "how you imagine this fellow came in possession of it?"

The girl was too much bewildered to answer at once, and Thad continued:

"If I understood him aright, his lordship sent you the medal, that you might examine it, so that you would recognize it again."

"Yes," she answered, promptly, "and to make sure, I made several impressions of each side of the medal."

"Then you were to return it to him?"

"Yes; I did return it."

"Direct; I mean, did you attend to the business of Expressing it with your own hands?"

"Well, I did it up, don't you understand, and sent it to the Express-office by my servant."

"Is this servant reliable?"

"I never discovered anything to the contrary."

"Then he must have dropped it on the way. It wouldn't be amiss to question your servant."

"Very well. Shall I call him?"

"If you please."

After a moment's silence Thad asked:

"By the way, Miss Melrose, do you happen to know a young gentleman by the name of Beach?"

"Albert Beach?"

"Yes."

"Yes, sir; he is my cousin."

Meanwhile she had touched a bell, and a servant appearing, she had dispatched her to fetch the servant who had been intrusted with the Expressing of the medal.

"Are you on good terms with this cousin of yours, Miss Melrose?" inquired Thad.

"Yes, sir, on very good terms; although we have never known much of each other."

"He is not very well off, is he?"

"No, sir, he is very poor. I understand."

"Has he ever applied to you for assistance?"

"No, sir."

"And you have never offered any of your own free will?"

"Oh, yes, I have given him small sums occasionally."

"Did he appear to be grateful?"

"Well, he never liked to take it, but finally allowed himself to be prevailed upon, with the understanding that it should be considered as a loan, which he promised to repay some time."

"Has he offered to repay any of these loans?"

"Not yet," she smiled. "I guess the poor fellow never had it to spare. I shouldn't have taken it, anyway."

"You do not think he would conspire against you for the purpose of obtaining your money, do you?"

"Good gracious, no! I should hope not. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing. I never can tell. So many of these cases turn out to be family affairs."

At this juncture the servant arrived, and Thad proceeded to question him.

CHAPTER XV.

UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS.

"WERE you intrusted with a package by your mistress on the fifth of this month, sir, which was to go to the department of foreign Express for transmission abroad?" the detective began.

"Yes, sir," replied the man.

"What did you do with it?" asked Thad, sharply, looking the fellow in the eye.

"I took it—"

"Where?"

"The fact is, sir," he faltered, growing confused, and stealing a frightened glance at his mistress, "the fact is—"

"Tell the truth!" interposed Thad, sternly.

"I was on my way to the foreign department, sir, when I met Mr. Beach, the misses' cousin, and he axed me w're I was goin', and I told him w'at was in the package, and I told him I didn't know. Then he took it and looked at it and felt of it, and finally said he believed it was a piece of money, and said it was not safe for me to take it to the office, and that he thought he'd better take it. So, thinking it would be safer in his hands, sir, I let him take it."

"That will do," said Thad.

As soon as the man had left the room, the detective remarked:

"That is about what I expected. Beach is into this conspiracy as deep as the other fellows. Instead of his finding the medal, as he claimed he did, he got it of your man and gave it to me, knowing I would give it to the person whom I should mistake for Lord Noddleford. An exceedingly subtle and well-developed plot, I must confess. But, now, let me ask, what shape was this money in which you signed over to this man?"

"Bank notes," she replied.

"Then you simply gave him a cheque?"

"No; you see the money has been invested in securities, but a week ago, I sold the securities for cash and placed the money in one of the safety-deposit vaults where I had formerly kept my securities. I then went with him and took the money out and gave it to him."

"So he has the money and has cleared out long before this time."

"I presume so," she said with a sigh. "But, sir, do you really think this man was an impostor?"

"I do not think it; I know it!"

"Then where do you imagine his lordship is?"

"That would be hard to tell; although as these fellows have the money, his lordship will no doubt soon turn up. They only intended to keep him in durance until they got the money. If they had had any trouble about getting the money, they would have held his lordship for some time longer."

"Oh, dear, do you think they will hurt him?" she murmured, the tears filling her eyes.

"It is hard to tell what these fellows will or won't do."

"Then I do hope they have got the money," she cried, covering her face with her handkerchief.

Thad made no comment, but he thought that if his lordship was anything like the fellow Adair had portrayed him, he was dear at half the money.

After a little reflection the detective said.

"There is one thing which I wish you would do, Miss Melrose. I wish you would ascertain at once, if you please, whether this fellow has taken the money out of the safety deposit vault."

"Certainly," she said rising. "I will go at once, and you may accompany me if you like."

"It will be a great pleasure, besides in that way I will know all the sooner what course to pursue."

"Excuse me, I shall be ready in a minute."

And away she ran, and in five minutes re-

turned, with the announcement that she was ready.

As the carriage in which he came had waited for him, he and Miss Melrose entered and it drove away down-town.

Half an hour later they alighted and entered the Drexel Bank building in whose vaults the safety deposit was located.

And it did not take many minutes thereafter to learn that the money had been taken from the compartment.

"That settles that part of it," observed Thad, when they were once more in the carriage. "His lordship will soon be released I have no doubt, and my work has just commenced."

"Do you think it likely," she asked, "that you will be able to recover the money?"

"I can hardly hope to recover all of it, but I shall at least capture the robbers, and in all likelihood recover a portion of it."

The girl was silent for some moments, and then questioned:

"Do you really think my cousin had anything to do with this affair?"

"It looks very much like it."

"Then, if you find that he has, I want to ask you a favor."

"What is it?"

"First, that you will not prosecute him."

"I don't know about that. I shall be powerless to save him, if he is found guilty."

"Still, you could allow him to escape?"

"I could, but by so doing I should lay myself liable to collusion."

She reflected a moment, and then looked up timidly.

"I would wish," she said, "that if you find him guilty, but find him repentant, you would allow him to keep whatever share of the money he may have got, and—and let him escape."

Thad shook his head doubtfully.

"Because," she pursued, "I have not done the right thing by my cousin. I see it now, and if he is guilty, he has been driven to it by his poverty and my neglect of him. I do wish you would try—try very hard to let him go. Because if he is convicted, I shall always feel that I was more to blame than he."

"Well, I will see what can be done."

When Thad had left the young lady at her home again, he drove directly to Beach's lodgings.

As it was after six by the time he reached the place, he was fortunate enough to catch the young man at home.

He received the detective as cordially as usual, and if there was anything wrong about him, he certainly did not show it.

"What luck?" was his first question.

But Thad was not inclined to return his friendliness, and answered:

"You probably know as well as I do."

"What do you mean?" inquired Beach, in well-feigned astonishment.

"See here, Beach," said the detective, sternly, "there is no use of your trying to dissemble with me any longer. I know as well as you do that you know all about this business."

"You speak in riddles."

"Possibly I can unriddle some of the riddles, then."

"I shall be glad to have you do it," retorted the young man, exhibiting a little temper for the first time.

"I shall do it, and not keep you in suspense very long, either."

"In the first place, I have discovered that you did not find that medal, as you told me you did."

"Yes?" coolly.

"Yes. The medal, as you know, was given to Miss Melrose's servant to dispatch, and you took it from him with the alleged intention of dispatching it for him, but, instead of doing so, you put it into your pocket, and afterward gave it to me, knowing that, if the plot went through as it had been planned, I would give it to Adair, believing him to be Lord Noddleford."

"You surprise me."

"You knew, also, when you told me that the conspirators would meet the ship at the same time that the pilot boat did, that they would go out and meet her long before she reached the point at which the pilot boat met her."

"This is all news to me."

"Then, you still deny that you had any knowledge of the affair?"

"I do, most positively."

"And you will probably deny it before a magistrate?"

"Yes, or on my dying bed."

"And probably deny having received the medal from the servant?"

"No, I will not deny that, but—"

"Ah, you will not deny that, eh?"

"No—that is—"

"Be careful. If you confess to that, you cannot still maintain that you found it where it had been lost by Adair, so how are you going to make the two stories harmonize?"

The fellow was pretty well confused by this time.

He made several ineffectual attempts to answer, and finally gave it up, pretended to fly into a rage, sprung to his feet and roared out:

"What do you mean by coming here with your insolent questions, sir? I know nothing of the matter, and I shall have to ask you to leave my house!"

"That I shall do with pleasure; at the same time, it will be to your advantage to have me remain, at least until you have confessed all you know of this affair, for in that case—if you will turn state's evidence and betray these scoundrels—it will not go half as hard with you as it will if you refuse to divulge what you know, and compel me to arrest you and bring you before a magistrate."

"I have nothing to tell," he answered, sullenly.

"It was the last request of your cousin that I should make it as easy as possible for you," pursued Thad, disregarding the other's last remark. "It was her earnest request that you should be allowed to retain whatever money you had got out of the affair, and that I should allow you to escape. She feels that she has not done the proper thing by you—that she has neglected you, and that it was your poverty and the feeling that you had been neglected by your rich cousin that drove you to the crime."

This had a strange effect on the fellow.

He hung his head a moment, and it looked for some time as if he was about to break down and confess.

But he at length raised his head and said in a shaky voice:

"I have nothing to tell."

"Is it really true that your cousin has neglected you, as she confesses she has?" questioned the detective, hoping to work upon his sensibilities.

"I don't know that she has—particularly," he muttered. "She has let me have a good deal of money one time and another."

"But, in the way of loans?"

"Oh, certainly—I wouldn't have taken it in any other way. Still, I have never returned any of it, and I do not know that I shall ever be able to, and I am sure that she never expects it."

"I am sure of that. At the same time, now that you have plenty, do you not think it would be the part of manliness to proffer her a return of what you owe her?"

"Then, you insist that I have received a portion of this booty, do you?"

"I can think nothing else, under the circumstances."

"Then, let me undeceive you. I have received not one penny."

"Notwithstanding your share in the work?"

Beach sprung up from the seat into which he had settled a moment before.

"I tell you, once for all, that I will hear no more of this! I have had no more to do with the affair than you, and I will not permit you to sit there and accuse me in my own house."

"As you like," returned Thad, rising. "I have done all I could for you, and would have gladly done much more—for your cousin's sake, if not for your own—if you had permitted me. If you come to grief, do not blame me. Good-day."

Beach made no response, and followed the detective to the door and silently closed it behind him.

Thad returned to his hotel, intending to procure a warrant for Beach's arrest the following morning.

Making himself up in the disguise of the sailor again, he made a call at Lew Sim-

mons's place a short time afterward, in hope of finding some of the crowd who had taken part in the conspiracy there.

CHAPTER XVI.

A "PEACH."

THAD found pretty much the same crowd at Simmons's den that he had found on the previous Saturday night, except that he saw nothing of the six men who were supposed to be Munson's allies.

After strolling about the place for some time, scanning each face in turn, he seated himself at one of the tables, and, for the sake of the privilege of remaining there, ordered some sort of a drink.

He then set to work watching the newcomers as they filed into the place at irregular intervals.

An hour or more went by, and still his men did not put in an appearance.

Still he sat waiting and watching the motley crowd.

The piano on the platform was banging away at a fearful rate, accompanied by the squeaky violin, and ever and anon some vicious-looking person would get up and howl an attempt at singing.

This was all very distracting to the detective, and after waiting another hour, he was about making up his mind to quit the place, when two men—ruffians, rather—entered, and sat down at a table some distance from him.

It wanted but a slight scrutiny of their faces to tell him that they belonged to the crowd he had seen on the former visit.

They were evidently pretty well under the influence of liquor, and appeared to be wrangling about something.

Thad arose and walking across the room, took a seat at a table adjoining the one at which they sat.

He could even then make out nothing of what they were saying, but it was evident they were in a very bad humor about something.

By listening very attentively, however, he was at length able to catch a few words here and there.

"I tell yer," said one, "we've been done up, and we oughter fight fer it."

"That's what I says," rejoined the other.

"E needn't tell me that he didn't git no 'aul outen it, fer I knows 'e did."

"So do I; bnt w'at are we a-goin' ter do bout it?"

"Fight, as I said."

"That's hail well an' good, but 'oo're ye goin' ter fight? 'E's now'e to be found."

"But we'll find 'im."

"Hi doubts that. Hi hain't very much fooled, 'e's sailed fer t'other side afore this."

"If he has, blame my cats if I don't follow him, and put the coppers onto him."

"Wouldn't hit be better to put the bobbies onter 'im 'ere? No tellin'; 'e may be 'idin' 'bout the burg yit. But Hi wonder w'y t'other lads don't show hup?"

"I don't know—ah, here they come now!" cried the other.

And as he spoke the other four men filed into the place and took seats about the table.

They appeared no less displeased with the treatment they had received at the hands of the conspirator than the first two, and soon there was a terrific wrangle going on.

Thad listened to it for nearly an hour, striving in vain to catch some word or sentence that would lead to a clue, but there was such a confused uproar that it was impossible to distinguish anything in particular.

At length, however, a lucky thing happened.

The men fell out among themselves.

A general fight soon ensued, and then the burly ushers of the den rushed in, and, by dint of belaying the belligerents with clubs and bung-starters, finally got them separated and put them out of the place.

Once outside, the men scattered off, singly and in twos.

Thad had his eye upon one fellow, who, he had noticed, had drank very lightly and appeared to be more intelligent than the rest.

The moment he got outside he started off by himself, and Thad followed him.

By walking briskly he was soon able to overtake him, and as soon as he was even with him, the detective hailed him.

"Good-evenin', shipmate," he said in a cheery voice.

The fellow turned and eyed him for a moment, and then replied in a friendly voice:

"Good-night to yourself, lad. Which way might ye be steerin' this time o' the night?"

"Oh, nowhere in particular," replied Thad; "just driftin' like in a dead calm."

"Dead calm, is it?" chuckled the other. "Wal, same here. Not a whiff big enough to blow the tucks outen me spanker. Were d'y'e hail from?"

"Wal, I belong in New York, but I've been tackin' around these waters for some time past, as long as there was sea enough to drift in, but now that my keel has begun to scrape sand, I've got to heave to or put away for deep water. By the way, shipmate, do you know of nothing that a feller can lash onto till the breeze springs up?"

"Not a hooter. Me an' me mates has just been shippin' on a shadder voyage, but we come back with an empty hold and a tattered sheet."

"What was the lay?"

The fellow eyed Thad for a moment, and then replied:

"I reckon I kin trust ye, shipmate. Ye seem ter carry a purty clean jib."

"If yer find any barnicles on me, shipmate," answered the detective, "ye kin take my left leg for a marlin-spike."

"I thought yer was all right, shipmate. Give us yer flipper."

When they had shaken hands, the stranger resumed:

"Ye see, it was this way. Thar was a chap that got acquainted with some of the crew, an' he got in with the rest on us somehow, an' then he says, says he, 'boys, I've got a little job fer ye. It won't take ye long, an' I'll give ye fifty apiece.' Wal, seein' as we had no sailin' orders nowhar else, an' as the locker was empty, we takes it, not thinkin' or carin' what the cruise was, so long as thar was tack an' jigger into it. Wal, this arternoon we does the run in ship-shape; but as soon as that lubber got his bow-sprit p'nted landward he crowded on every rag he could carry and left the crew in the lurch, without chart or compass."

"Who was the lubber?" questioned the detective.

"Oh, they calls him count somethin' or other; but my 'pinion is, he's no 'count. Hal hal hal!"

As soon as the fellow had ceased laughing at his own very bad joke Thad asked:

"You have no notion as to which way the porpoise pointed, have you?"

"No more'n the nab below decks knows which way the binnacle points."

"What was the tack, anyway?"

The man related in detail the account of himself and comrades going out in the yacht with Munson and taking a man from an incoming ship, and Thad asked:

"Who was the man you took on the yacht?"

"If the purser don't know him no better than I do, he'll fall shy of his quarter-pay," replied the other.

"When you got ashore," interjected Thad, forgetting his sailor dialect in his eagerness to learn all he could about the case, "did the man who was taken off the steamer go off in company with this count?"

"Yes, they boarded one o' them rakish crafts they call cabs, an' put away under full sail."

"How was the man who was taken off the ship treated on board the yacht?"

"Full-mess, champagne an' lollypop; no thimble-jiggers an' sour duff for him."

"He did not act as though he were a prisoner, then?"

"Not a bit on't. But say, what's in the wind, shipmate?"

"Nothing," replied Thad. "I was just a-droppin' my lead to fill in."

"Ay, lad; but ye've shifted sail since ye begun to palaver."

Thad saw what the fellow was driving at, and laughingly said:

"Ay, ay, shipmate. I've been driftin' with these land-lubbers so much of late that

I sometimes make a wrong tack. But I must put about here, and coast long toward Broad street. Whither away?"

"My boardin'-house, w'ich is just here in Hackett street."

And Thad lost no time in getting away from him, for it had been a painful ordeal for him to keep up the sailor dialect and express himself.

He had gone so far out of his way that, as soon as his sailor companion was out of the way he boarded a horse-car and rode as far as Broad street, from which it was but a short distance to his hotel.

On leaving the house he had taken the stairway and had succeeded in getting out without observation, but he was too much fatigued to walk up, and took the elevator, which caused the operator to stare in astonishment at his sailor make-up.

He had no more than reached his room and exchanged his clothes and disguise, late as it was—being about midnight—when a bell-boy came up to tell him that there was a gentleman in the office who would like to see him.

"He's been here more than an hour," said the boy, "and he says he must see you tonight."

"Who is he? Did he give his name?"

"No, sir; he just told me to say that a gentleman wanted to see you. He had me running up here every ten minutes ever since he came, thinking you might have slipped up without us seeing you."

"Very well—stay, what does he look like?"

"Like a gentleman."

"Well-dressed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Young or old?"

"A young man."

"I guess I know who it is. Let him come up."

The detective sat down and waited.

"I thought he would come to time sooner or later," he mused. "He must be deucedly anxious, though, to come this time of night. That talk I gave him about his cousin was what did the work. He is not a bad fellow at heart, I suppose, and when he came to think the subject over alone, his feelings got the better of him."

At that moment there was a timid rap at the door.

"Come in!" called Thad. "He feels a little sheepish, I have no doubt, which accounts for his timid rap."

But evidently the visitor did not hear his invitation, for he repeated the rap.

"Come in!" he called again.

But still the door did not open.

"I wonder what is the matter with him. I suppose he's waiting for me to open it for him."

And the detective arose and walked to the door with a view to opening it.

Just then a thought occurred to him.

"Can it be?" he stopped to ask himself. "No it cannot be. Anyway, if it were he, he would not attempt anything of the kind in a public place like this."

The visitor's timid manner, coming upon him after all the exciting incidents of the day, had caused a suspicion to cross the detective's mind.

It had occurred to him that perhaps some of the conspirators' allies, or even Munson himself, knowing that Thad was on his track, and knew altogether too much to suit the conspirator, had concluded to put him out of the way, and instead of entering when invited, preferred to have him come to the door.

But Thad promptly dispelled the weakness as unworthy of him.

This had all flashed through his mind in the fraction of a minute, but before he had made up his mind completely, short as the time was, the visitor had knocked the third time.

Thad then promptly threw open the door.

But he was disappointed in his visitor.

If it had been Munson, he could not have been more completely surprised.

Before him stood none other than Henry Adair, the actor.

At least, that was what the detective supposed, but when he came to scrutinize him closely, he was a little in doubt.

At all events he invited him to enter the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER SURPRISE.

THAD was so uncertain as to the personality of his visitor, that he did not venture to call him by name, but merely gave his hand, and said:

"Good-evening, sir!"

"Good evening!" responded the visitor, in a voice as timid as his knock had been.

Thad waited for him to continue, but instead of doing so, the visitor helped himself to a chair, which he sunk into in a gingerly fashion, and when the detective had also seated himself, the fellow said:

"You are no doubt surprised to see me here, Mr. Lumsden?"

The fact of the visitor knowing his name, or rather the name he had assumed on several occasions, was an additional surprise to the detective.

Then it all seemed to come to him.

This was the real Lord Noddleford, and he had got the name from Miss Melrose.

And then the stranger proceeded:

"I am sorry to have inconvenienced you, sir, by calling at so late an hour, but I consider it my duty to give you a piece of information which will, I think, be of value to you."

"You have come from Miss Melrose, I presume?" interposed Thad.

"Well, yes—that is, I was at her house, I am sorry to say, this afternoon."

He was sorry to say?

This was a strange revelation, thought the detective,

"You see," pursued the visitor, in a tremulous voice, "when I went into this shameful affair, I did not realize fully the enormity of the crime I was about to commit. And then I was induced, partly by my poverty and partly by the oily words of two of the most subtle scoundrels that God ever let live."

Thad's astonishment grew every minute.

He held his breath and listened.

"When Monte Munson first broached the scheme to me," pursued the visitor, "he put the matter in such a way as to lead me to think it was some sort of a speculation—a trifle questionable, perhaps, but not entirely dishonest, and from that on he and the other led me on step by step, until before I realized where I was, we had reached the climax of a criminal action. I will allow myself this much extenuation, however, that they kept me drunk the whole time, so that I was only vaguely conscious of what I was doing. Yes, the cursed demon drink was the principal cause of it all. Taking advantage of my weakness, they have made a cat's-paw of me to enrich themselves, ruin me, and leave me the beggar I was before."

The detective began to get the drift of the man's half-intelligible harangue through his head now, and as he paused Thad said:

"Then, you are Henry Adair?"

"Certainly," replied the other, looking at his questioner with an expression of surprise. "Who else should I be?"

"To tell you the truth, I was not quite certain as to whether you were Henry Adair or Lord Noddleford."

Adair smiled somewhat bitterly and shrugged his shoulders.

"You see," pursued Thad, "you personated that individual so well this afternoon that I was not quite certain that I was not addressing the real person this time."

"Well, so you were—in one sense of the word. That is, you were addressing the only Lord Noddleford that ever landed on these shores, so far as I am aware."

Here was another surprise.

"What do you mean?" queried Thad, with a puzzled countenance.

"Just what I say."

"Do you mean to tell me that Lord Noddleford did not arrive as expected?"

Another smile, which was in the nature of commiseration this time, and the fellow said:

"Pardon me, sir, but I imagined that you had discovered more of this plot than you have."

"I thought I had discovered a good deal, but it seems that I had not gone as deep as I thought I had."

"Well, then, to begin at the beginning, let me tell you that Lord Noddleford is a myth."

"What?"

"That it is the truth."

"But Miss Melrose was betrothed to him?"

"So she imagined, but she was deceived.

Let me explain."

"Do, please."

"As I said, when I went into this thing I did so with my eyes shut. Munson, after we had gone a little way into the plot, informed me that a certain heiress was engaged to be married to a certain lord, and I believed him. But the whole thing was a hoax. In the first place, he and Albert Beach, who I did not then know had anything to do with the plot, had already cooked the thing up between them. After perfecting their plans, and Munson had learned all the facts necessary from Beach, about his rich cousin, Munson went to England where, through letters of introduction from Beach, he made the acquaintance of some of Miss Melrose's distinguished friends there.

Taking advantage of the acquaintance thus formed, the wily rascal got possession of some of their penmanship, and, being the most expert penman in the world, soon learned to imitate theirs to perfection. He then commenced the correspondence with Miss Melrose which ultimately resulted in the introduction of the alleged Lord Noddleford to her. Then commenced a correspondence between the so-called lord and the heiress, which, as you may guess, was kept up on his part by no other than Munson himself.

"Well, this thing was continued until the betrothal was consummated, and then Munson returned to this country. This was about a month ago. Then it was that he let it out that Miss Melrose, the heiress, was betrothed to one Lord Noddleford, so that the newspapers got hold of and published it. Of course the lady herself was as badly deceived as any one else.

"His next move was to look up some one on this side who could impersonate the so-called lord, and, knowing that I was something of an expert in delineating character, especially that of English fops, he fixed upon me."

"Excuse me, but how did he manage about the correspondence after he returned to this side?"

"Oh, I should have mentioned that. He had a confederate in the department of foreign mails who stopped all letters addressed to Lord Noddleford, gave them to Munson, who read and answered them, and the answers were returned to this confederate to be stamped with the foreign stamp and put into the delivery in due time to be delivered to Miss Melrose."

"Well, this is the most ingenious plot I ever ran upon in all my career," exclaimed Thad. "But, go on."

"Up to two weeks ago I did not fully comprehend what the plot was, or rather what he represented it to be. Then he told me he had to go to New York and invited me to accompany him. While on the train he explained the scheme of the abduction of the so-called lord, which I believe you overheard."

"Yes; that was my first clue," admitted the detective. "But you did not know at that time that there was not to be a genuine lord and a real abduction?"

"No more than you did."

"When did you first discover this?"

"This afternoon—after the thing was all done."

"How did you discover it then?"

"He sent me a note, explaining everything."

"But somebody was abducted off the ship?"

"No. I'll tell you what that amounted to. Munson had one of his confederates—a gambler—on the other side, sail with a picked-up retinue, as Lord Noddleford. We went out in a yacht, as per arrangement, and met the steamer at Delaware Breakwater, where the alleged lord left the ship and took passage in the yacht, while I remained in the state-room to meet you."

"How did you know that I would meet the vessel?"

"I knew you would, because Beach was to go to you and reveal enough of the plot that you could be sure to do so."

"Now about this so-called Lord Noddleford. Is there any such a person in the English Peerage?"

"I believe there is an obscure country

baronet of that name somewhere in some of the back counties. You may be sure that he was sufficiently obscure so that there was no danger of detection or Munson would never have used the title; nor would he have dared to use a fictitious one. He is too cunning for that."

"Well, after leaving the hotel that morning you called upon Miss Melrose, and she gave you the key to the deposit vault and a pass to show the warden?"

"Yes."

"After which you called at the bank and withdrew the money?"

"Ah, there is where I made a fool of myself, or rather allowed this scoundrel to make a fool of me."

"How so?"

"Instead of going there, and getting the money, and retaining my share of it, I allowed him to take the pass and key and get the money, while I remained outside. Now you can have some idea of the subtlety of the man, when I tell you that he had arranged for another of his confederates to come along while I was waiting and engage me in conversation, so that he was enabled to escape from the building with the money, jump into a back and drive away before I was aware what was going forward."

"So you got nothing?"

"Not a penny."

"And Beach?"

"He is as badly off as myself."

"Did he get nothing, either?"

"Not a cent!"

"And you have no idea where Munson has gone?"

"No more than you have."

"Was this your reason for coming to me and making this confession? I mean, because you failed to get your share of the swag, as the light-fingered gentry call it?"

"That is exactly the reason. There is no use of concealing anything. If I had got half of that enormous amount of money I should have been so elated over it that no mortal would have been able to extort a confession from me. I would, in fact, have become as great a rascal as himself."

"I believe Munson got a pretty big haul out of the old Jew in New York, also, did he not?"

"About twenty thousand dollars!"

"And did you get nothing of that?"

"Not a red."

"So you have been duped all the way through?"

"Yes, like the consummate fool that I am."

"When Beach came to me with his alleged revelation of the plot, he claimed to have spent the night in New York—in a room adjoining yours and Munson's. Is that true?"

"No; he was not near there."

"So that the conversation he claimed to have overheard was all a fabrication?"

"Entirely—if he claimed to have heard any conversation—for, I assure you, he was no nearer than Philadelphia at the time."

"What he told me then was simply what he had been told to say by the arch conspirator himself?"

"Exactly."

"Have you seen Beach since the transaction of this afternoon?"

"Yes, I was at his lodgings this evening."

"What does he think about it?"

"He is pretty badly cut up."

"What do you think he will do—confess or clear out?"

"It is hard to tell. He swears he will not confess, and said nothing about running away."

"Did you intimate to him that you intended to make a confession?"

"Yes, I told him I proposed to tell you everything."

"What did he say?"

"He said I was a fool."

At that moment there was a rap at the door, and when the detective opened it, who should stand there but Beach!

CHAPTER XVIII.

MORE LIGHT.

If Thad was surprised to see Beach at his door at that particular time, Adair was tenfold more so.

Nor was either of them any more surprised

to see him than he was to find Adair with the detective.

The two late conspirators, or dupes, rather, eyed each other with undisguised disfavor for a moment, and then, as if by mutual agreement, both began to smile, rather bitterly, though, and extended their hands to each other.

"There is no use of any quarrel between us now," said Adair. "We are both in the mire, and misery loves company."

"You are right, Henry," rejoined Beach. "At the same time, I am the greater criminal of the two, and I owe you an apology."

"I do not know that apologies will be any consolation to a man who has allowed his weakness to get him into a trap which will send him to the penitentiary."

Beach shrugged and smiled with extreme bitterness.

"Well," he muttered, "to use your own trite aphorism, misery loves company. There will be a couple of us in the same boat."

Then turning to the detective, he went on:

"You did not expect to see me here, after what I told you this evening, I presume?"

"I certainly did not," replied Thad. "But, we were just discussing you before you came in."

"Well, I have concluded to take your advice."

"And confess?"

"And confess."

"For the reason, I presume, that you got left on the division of the spoils?"

"Well, yes, that is the principal reason; but there are also other reasons."

"Among which are that your guilt was already known, eh?"

"Well—perhaps," he answered, in a somewhat broken voice. "Shall I proceed?"

"Yes, go on. Sit down."

The young man sunk into a chair, and after some hesitation began in a timid voice:

"When you spoke to-night of the bitterness which I might feel as a result of my cousin's neglect of me in my poverty and misfortune, you struck the key-note of all my wrong-doing. I have long felt very bitter against her for allowing me to almost starve while she had millions to spend in luxury—foolish luxury, frequently. So when Count D'Arville, otherwise Monte Munson, came to me and proposed his scheme, I was ready for it at once."

"You understand the whole affair, then, from the first?"

"No, that is the strange thing about it. Although I gave Munson letters of introduction to friends of my cousin in England, it never occurred to me what the real plot was to be."

"What did you think when you learned that your cousin was betrothed to this alleged Lord Noddleford?"

"I believed it to be a fact, because I knew she had a large acquaintance among the nobility, and always supposed she would one day marry among them."

"You had no idea that the whole thing was the creation of this man?"

"Not the least. Even after his return to this country he still led me to believe that she was engaged to this lord, and that he would arrive here at a certain time."

"When did you first learn the truth?"

"Not until this afternoon."

"He was pretty clever at keeping his own counsel, was he not?"

"His equal does not exist."

"You were to receive one-third of the booty, I suppose?"

"That was the understanding."

"I wonder how many people were promised one-third of that money?" interposed Adair at this point. "As for myself, he promised me one-half; at the same time he promised the old Jew in New York one-third."

"And in the end nobody got anything but himself," put in the detective. "Not even the poor wretches who went out with the yacht with the understanding that they were to receive fifty dollars apiece. They received but ten dollars apiece."

"Oh, he's an unmitigated scoundrel," sighed Beach. "But what are you going to do with us, Mr. Detective? Lock us up?"

"I have just been considering," returned Thad. "I suppose as a matter of justice—

as understood by the authorities—I ought. But there is another side to justice, which I sometimes consider to be higher than the justice as interpreted by the courts. You young men have been led into this business by a much older and much more cunning man than yourselves, and for that reason you are entitled to a certain amount of sympathy; your weakness and greed which allowed you to listen to his counsel are reprehensible, but on the other hand, again, you have both made a clean breast of your iniquity, which condones your offense somewhat. Now, to sum up, I will say, that if you will both pitch in and do what you can to assist me in catching this scoundrel, I shall do all in my power toward lightening your sentence, or having it set aside entirely, if it is a possible thing."

"That was my intention, anyway," interposed Beach.

"And mine," added Adair.

"Very well. I believe I can trust you, and from this day forth we will work hand-in-hand for the defeat of this arch-scoundrel."

"We will," echoed the other two.

"Have you any idea what his plans for the future are?" questioned Thad.

"No," replied Beach. "He was as close about that as about everything else. But I believe I can find a clue within a very short space of time."

"Has he any family or friends in this country that you are aware of?"

"I think that he has, and it is that that I depend upon for my clue."

"Where does he belong, anyway?"

"This country—New York, I think."

"Well, I shall depend upon you to do what you can toward running down this clue, and in the mean time I want you, Adair, to do what you can, and I shall do the same. We will spend to-morrow in the work, and meet here to-morrow night to compare notes."

So it was agreed, and the young men bade the detective good-night and took their leave.

As soon as Thad was left to himself he examined the shipping news and found that a vessel sailed the next afternoon for Liverpool.

"He will, in all probability, attempt to get away on that vessel," mused the detective, "but I shall put a veto on that, if he tries it."

He spent a good part of the next forenoon running from one railway depot to another trying to discover whether any one answering the description of the conspirator had left the city the previous afternoon or evening, but if there had he had not impressed any of the various ticket-sellers sufficiently for them to remember him.

A little after noon he called upon Miss Melrose.

That lady was eager and anxious to hear some tidings of her missing lord, as she had heard nothing of the true state of affairs.

"What can be the meaning of his detention?" she said, as soon as she saw the detective. "You said you thought they would set him at liberty as soon as they got the money—and they have got it, as we very well know."

"My dear lady," began Thad, "I shall be under the painful necessity of making a very unpleasant revelation to you."

He then broke the news of the conspiracy in its true light to her, from the very beginning, but omitting to mention Beach's connection with it.

She was naturally thunderstruck with the revelation, and was even loth to believe it for some time.

"You don't mean to tell me," she uttered over and over again, "that there is no such person as Lord Noddleford?"

"So far as I am aware, there is not."

"But I have so many pictures of him, and so many nice letters from him. Oh, he wrote such beautiful letters. I never saw any one who could write such letters."

"Doubtless. But you must remember he is an old hand at the business."

"Lord Noddleford?"

"No Monte Munson."

"Eh?"

"I mean the Count D'Arville."

"Is it possible that he wrote all of those beautiful letters?" she cried spitefully.

"There is not the slightest doubt about it."

"Gracious!" she sighed. "Do you know I could almost love him, mean and wicked as he is, for having written those letters? Shall I show you some of them?"

"I am obliged to you," smiled the detective, "but I think I won't trouble you. I am too old to appreciate love letters."

"But he is much older than you—very much older—and he seems to have appreciated them."

"Oh, it was a matter of business with him. Perhaps if there was a chance of catching a criminal by writing love letters I might do it too. I have done almost everything but that, and I may come to that next. By the way, did the count, during any of his talks with you, give you any clue as to where he lives or whether he has any family or not?"

"Yes, he lived at the upper end of Girard avenue, and that he had a fine family and a daughter about my own age. He promised to bring her round to see me, and invited me to call upon his daughter."

"All of which was just as much fiction as Lord Noddleford," smiled Thad.

"Don't you believe he has a daughter, then?"

"Oh, he may have, but he does not live in Girard avenue, and if you had ever gone hunting around that neighborhood for his daughter you would have wasted your time."

"This is terrible."

"Yes, it is terrible, and it was even more terrible that he should have robbed you of so much money."

"I care nothing for that in comparison with my regret at losing my lord."

"Yes, that was unfortunate too," said Thad, smiling in spite of his attempted gravity.

"Oh, you didn't tell me," she suddenly exclaimed. "Did you learn whether Albert was mixed up in the affair or not?"

"I am sorry to say I did."

"Are you sure that he is?"

"As sure as any one can be when he hears a man's confession."

"Has he confessed?" she almost screeched.

"He has, and what is worse, he was more culpable than Adair."

"Have they locked him up?"

"No, not yet, and they probably won't."

CHAPTER XIX.

GROPPING IN THE DARK.

WHEN the steamer's passengers were embarking that afternoon Thad was on hand and took note of every one who passed aboard.

But when the last one had embarked he was satisfied that his man was not among them.

There was but one conclusion now, and that was that, if he had sailed for Europe he had gone from some other port besides Philadelphia.

He then made another search along Girard avenue, inquiring in all the corner groceries and drugstores along the avenue for a mile or more from the upper end downward; but all to no effect.

No person suiting the description of Munson was to be traced.

So the day passed without anything being accomplished, and he returned to the hotel tired and disgusted.

Some time after dinner Beach and Adair called.

Adair's day had been as fruitless as Thad's, but Beach thought he had discovered the fag end of a clue.

"What is your clue, my boy?" questioned the detective, when the young man hinted that he had found one.

"Mind, I don't say it is a clue," rejoined Beach modestly. "I'll tell you what it is, and let you judge for yourself."

"Go on."

"On one or two occasions since Munson's return from Europe I have seen him in company with a young lady, or girl rather, who I understood was his daughter."

Thad recalled what Miss Melrose said about

the conspirator's daughter, and was all attention.

He began to think that possibly there was something in the story, after all.

"Yesterday afternoon, while Munson was gone out with the yacht, I passed the young woman on the street; but, although I had been introduced to her, and she looked straight at me, she did not appear to recognize me."

"Did you notice which way she went?"

"Yes, for a short distance. She went into a drug store on the corner of Fifth street, but, as I had no idea of ever wanting to find where she lived, I paid no more attention to her. To-day, however, I went to this same drug store and made inquiries of several of the clerks, and finally found one who recalled the young lady from my description, and he gave me her address. But the name was Jerome. I went to the address given, which was in Girard avenue, and inquired for Miss Jerome. The servant who came to the door said that the young lady lived there, but that she was not then at home."

"Did she say what time she would be at home?"

"She said that she would not be back until very late to-night, but that she would be at home any time during the forenoon tomorrow, she thought."

"This may prove a clue, my boy. Shall you call in the morning?"

"No; I thought you had better do that."

"Very well; if you think I can manage the affair better than you, I shall go."

"I'm sure you can."

Beach gave the detective the address, and he and Adair took their leave.

The following forenoon Thad, dressed in a stylish suit and made up as a well-to-do man about town, with a pointed beard, called at the number Beach had given him.

Fortunately, Miss Jerome was at home, and he was surprised to find that she was little more than a child.

She was also surprised to see the detective, and wondered greatly what he could want.

"I wished to see your father, in reality, Miss Jerome," he said; "but, learning that he was away from home, I thought you might be able to furnish me the information I desire."

This, as may be supposed, was all said at a venture, for the detective was groping in the dark; and the look of astonishment in the girl's face showed him that he had hit wide of the mark somewhere.

"My father?" she exclaimed, with wide open eyes. "Why, I have no father. My father is dead."

"Oh, ah. I'm sorry for that," stammered Thad, scarcely knowing where to commence next.

But he was not long in recovering his wits, and asked:

"How long has he been dead? I was not aware that he was dead."

"Why, you must have heard of it," she said, simply. "He's been dead more than five years."

"No, I hadn't heard of it, that's a fact; but then, you see, I have been away a good deal. So, when I saw you with the old gentleman the other day, I was certain that it was your father."

The girl laughed heartily.

"Oh, dear, no," she said. "That must have been Mr. Livingstone you saw me with."

"Ah, possibly it was. A middle-aged gentleman, rather good looking, ruddy complexion, very white hair and beard?"

"That is Mr. Livingstone."

"Very neat dresser, somewhat given to diamonds and jewelry?"

"Yes, yes," she laughed, "that is Mr. Livingstone."

"A relative, I presume?"

"Mr. Livingstone a relative? Oh, dear no."

"A dear friend, perhaps?"

"Well, tolerably so. You see he has been stopping with us for the past month. In fact, he stopped here before he went abroad."

"You take roomers, then?"

"Yes, sir. You see, when papa died mother was left with this great big house and not any too much of an income, so she concluded there could be no harm in taking

a few gentlemen roomers, as it would not be so lonesome, besides helping along, don't you know?"

"A very plausible thing to do. And while we are on the subject, I wonder if your mamma has an empty room now?"

"Yes, sir," said the little miss with an eye to business, "one of the loveliest suites in the house. Would you like to look at it?"

Thad hesitated, and then said:

"If it won't be too much trouble, miss."

"Not the least trouble, I assure you. Come right along, I'll show it to you."

And before he had time to think she had him out in the hall and was bounding up a broad flight of stairs like a young colt.

Thad followed as rapidly as he could consistently do, and when he had reached the first floor the girl was already opening a door.

"Come right in, sir," she called, looking back saucily.

And when he had got inside she continued:

"Aren't they lovely?"

"They are, indeed," admitted the detective.

"You see mamma had them all newly papered and done up for Mr. Livingstone, for he wrote from England that he would be here, and we expected he would stay a long time. But he's only been here a month, and now he's going away. He says that his business calls him away."

"Oh, he has gone, then?" said Thad ruefully.

"Oh, yes, sir. He went this morning."

Thad cursed his luck that he had not known of the address that he might have called the night before.

"The rooms, I think, will suit very well," he said absently. "Do you happen to know where this Mr. Livingstone went?"

"No, sir. He will be several places—New York part of the time, I think. But he promised to write to us, so we will soon know where he is."

"Would you mind letting me know his address as soon as you learn it, miss?"

The girl looked at him in surprise.

"You seem to take great interest in Mr. Livingstone," she observed.

"Yes, I do. You see I didn't know his name, but he was pointed out to me as a man with an extensive acquaintance abroad and as I anticipate taking a trip soon, I desire to consult him on some particular matters."

"Oh."

Then suddenly starting, as with an inspiration:

"Oh, come to think of it, he said that if I should learn his address not to give it to a mortal, for the reason that there are certain disagreeable people who are always annoying him with impudent letters. So I couldn't promise you to give you his address, even if I got it."

"But this is a matter which is of as much importance to him as it is to myself, my dear young lady."

She hesitated and looked very sharply at him for some time, and finally said:

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. You look like a very nice gentleman, and I don't believe you would deceive me, so if I get a letter from Mr. Livingstone, I'll write to him about you, and if he says I may give you his address, you shall have it."

Thad knew it was all up with him then, for if she wrote to the conspirator telling him that a man in Philadelphia wanted his address, Thad could easily imagine what the answer would be.

But there seemed no way out of the dilemma, so he laughingly replied:

"Very well, miss, if that is your decision."

And they walked down stairs.

In the hall below, as he was about taking his leave, she asked timidly:

"Do you think you shall take the room, sir?"

"Possibly," he replied. "I shall see. Good morning."

And when he was half-way down the stoop he chanced to look back, and found her watching him with the same expression of wonder and surprise that he had noticed when he asked about her father.

Thad hadn't gone half a block from the house before an idea occurred to him.

It might, after all, be worth his while, he

thought, to take the rooms formerly occupied by Munson, or Livingstone, as there was no telling but the former occupant might have left some scrap of paper or something which would lead to a clue.

He therefore turned immediately upon his heel and returned to the house.

This time he was met by the mother, so he had to explain that he had been there before, had looked at the suite of rooms, and, after thinking the matter over, had concluded to take them.

He paid for a week in advance, and told the lady that he would move in during the day.

He then returned to the hotel, settled up and made arrangements to have his baggage removed to the new lodgings.

He also left word at the hotel for Beach and Adair to call on him at the latter place.

By the middle of the afternoon he was installed in his new quarters, and before attending to anything else, he set about rummaging drawers, searching through closets and every other place where a paper could be slipped, for anything which might have been the property of the late tenant.

But all to no purpose, and he was at last compelled to abandon the search.

And then when he had ceased to search and was occupied in taking some garments from his bag and hanging them up in a closet, he noticed for the first time that a shelf near the top of the closet was covered with a newspaper, as women are in the habit of covering shelves when they wish to put things on them.

The paper was covered with dust and yellow with age, but that did not hinder Thad from lifting it out and shaking it.

The dust flew in every direction, filling the room, but that was not the only thing that fell out.

A card, which had been concealed in the folds some way also fell out and dropped upon the floor.

The card was also yellow with age and very much soiled as if it had had something spilt over it, but the detective had no trouble in reading it.

It was a club ticket, certifying that Leander C. Livingstone was a member in good standing of the Twilight Club of New York, and was signed by the president and secretary of the club.

The card was at least two years old, but nevertheless its discovery gave Thad a greater thrill of pleasure than anything had done for many a day.

There seemed to be something tangible about the clue which had not existed in anything he had found before.

That very evening he took a train for New York.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE SCENT AT LAST.

THAD arrived in New York at about half-past eight, and he went at once to the house of George F. Pomeroy, the man whose name was on the card as president of the Twilight Club.

He was lucky enough to find the gentleman at home, but was sorry to learn that he was no longer president of the club.

He gave the detective a good deal of information, however.

He remembered Livingstone very well, and had seen him at the club very recently.

"How recently?" asked Thad.

"Let me see," mused the other. "We meet every second Thursday evening, and last Thursday week was the last meeting. He was there then, if I am not mistaken."

"You have not seen him since then?"

"No, sir."

"Has he a residence in this city?"

"I believe he has; but I cannot tell you where it is. Perhaps you might find it in the City Directory. Oh, I'll tell you who can tell you. Lawyer Snow in the Stewart Building can probably tell you all about him, as they are great friends."

"Thanks. I shall call there in the morning."

Having learned thus much, which he considered of great importance, the detective took his leave and for the first time in over a week, went to his own home to spend the night.

Early the following morning he was at the office of Lawyer Snow in the Stewart Building.

Mr. Snow was a bald-headed, bow-legged little man, and, in spite of his name, was evidently of the Hebrew persuasion.

He appeared to be over his ears in business and looked up at Thad with an annoyed expression when he came in.

"What can I do for you?" he asked shortly.

"I shall take but a moment of your time," said the detective, "seeing that you are very busy."

"Busy?" screeched the little man in a shrill voice. "I am always busy. Only idle people—lazy people are not busy. All men of business and their right minds about them are busy—always busy. What can I do for you?"

"I simply wanted to ask you if you could inform me where I can find Mr. Leander Livingstone."

At the mention of the name the little man's countenance underwent a radical change.

The frown—the annoyed expression melted away, and a broad, good-natured smile took its place.

"Leander, or Andy as we call him?" he chirruped. "Why, I should say so. Do you know old Andy?"

"Not intimately. I hope to become better acquainted with him."

"Ah, you must. Old Andy is the salt of the earth, I tell you. You must know old Andy, if you wish to be anybody."

"I certainly shall, if possible," said Thad. "Will you be good enough to tell me where he lives?"

The little fellow reflected.

"Bless my soul if I don't forget now. Let me see, he did live in Lexington avenue before he went abroad the last time, but I think he gave up that house before he went away, and I'll be switched if I can think, if, indeed, he told me, where he does live now. However, there will be no trouble in finding cut, as he is in here every day of his life."

"Is he, indeed?"

Thad could scarcely conceal his enthusiasm at the thought of being, as he imagined, so near the prey.

"Why, yes, every day of his life."

"When was he in here last?"

"Let me see, was it yesterday? No—yes—yes, he was in here yesterday afternoon."

"Did he say anything about when he might drop in again?"

"No, he never tells me when he is coming. He just drops in by chance, as it were. But he is liable to be in any time. He is just as likely as not to drop in this morning. And then again he may not show his face here for a week."

"Does he usually come in in the forenoon or afternoon?"

"Sometimes one, sometimes another; though, to tell you the truth it is generally in the afternoon."

"Well," said Thad, rising, "I may call back."

"Who shall I tell him called, if he should come in?"

The first name that popped up in the detective's head was Jerome, so he gave that name.

"Very well, I'll tell him," said the little man.

And Thad withdrew, feeling extremely comfortable over his discovery.

As he left the building he walked across Broadway, and stationing himself on the opposite side of the street, he proceeded to watch the entrance to the building.

It was but little after ten when he took up his vigil, and he remained on his post till half past twelve, when an unpleasant gnawing at his stomach warned him it was time to go for something to eat. So, trusting to luck that his man would not arrive in his absence, he went to a restaurant close at hand, and partook of a light lunch.

He had not been absent more than half an hour, but thinking it possible that his man might have gone up into the building during his absence, Thad entered the building, took the elevator, and called again at little Snow's office.

The little lawyer was just on the point of going out to his lunch, and as soon as he espied the detective he exclaimed:

"Well, I do declare! You are unlucky—very. You had not been gone ten minutes this morning when that man came in."

"Is it possible?" cried Thad, in consternation. "How the deuce did he manage to get in without my seeing him?"

But seeing that he was about to betray himself, he modified the sentence by saying:

"Thinking it barely possible that he might come very soon, I waited down-stairs for some time, and I am surprised that he should have escaped me."

"At which entrance did you wait?"

"The only entrance that I knew there was—on Broadway. Is there another?"

"Oh, certainly, there is one on Chambers street, and that is the way he usually goes and comes."

Thad inwardly cursed his luck, but soon consoled himself with the thought that he might succeed better next time, when the little lawyer dispelled even this ray of hope by remarking:

"It's too bad, too, for it will be the last chance for you."

"Last chance?" echoed Thad, in dismay.

"What do you mean?"

"He sails on the Umbria, for Queenstown, at two o'clock. Still, if you are quick, you may catch him before he goes aboard, as it is now just one," pursued the little man, consulting a mammoth gold watch.

Thad waited for no further information, but hastened from the office with all speed, and as soon as he reached the street hailed the first cab he came to, and ordered the driver to drive him to Pier 40, foot of Clarkson street, as soon as horseflesh and Providence would permit.

Cabby wanted no second bidding, and, laying the lash upon his old horse, tore away up Broadway, as far as Houston street, and then turning west, soon landed his passenger at Pier 40, North River.

But as the passengers were all aboard, and the vessel just ready to cut loose, the detective could do no more than examine the passenger-list hastily, and make a running survey of the faces of such passengers who were still on deck.

No name which the conspirator had hitherto used, so far as Thad knew, was to be found on the passenger-list, and the man himself did not appear among the crowd on deck. So that if he was aboard at all, he had registered under an entirely new name, and had already discreetly retired to his state-room.

And what was worse, there was no time now to search the state-rooms, for visitors had already been ordered off. So the detective, with the rest, was compelled to go ashore.

Then a happy thought struck him.

He went into the cable office and wrote this message:

"To CHIEF OF POLICE, Queenstown:—

"Detain man on Umbria—middle age, white hair and beard, ruddy complexion, good looking, elegant dresser, diamonds, jewelry, etc.; goes under Count D'Arville and various aliases. Wanted for conspiracy and robbery."

This cablegram Thad took the liberty of signing with the name of the superintendent, knowing that the latter would have no objection when the matter had been explained to him.

Thad was just on the point of handing the message to the operator for transmission, when by some accident his eyes fell upon a message blank which had been crumpled and thrown upon the floor.

Why he should have noticed it, and still further, why he should have had the curiosity to pick it up, he himself could not have explained, but so he did. He picked up the message blank, spread it out, smoothed out its wrinkles as well as possible, and, although the writing was smeared and blurred almost beyond deciphering, he finally made out to read:

"To CHARLES W. FORDHAM, Esq.,

"12 Bond st., Strand, London, Eng.:—

"On arrival of Umbria at Queenstown, 8th ultimo, give to agent British-American Press Ass.: 'Count D'Arville arrived on Umbria on way to France, thence Algiers.'

"(Signed) LEANDER C. LIVINGSTONE."

That determined Thad's course.

He would not send the message. But first of all, he showed the crumpled message to the agent and asked him if he had transmitted anything like it.

The agent took it, and, after perusing it carefully, said:

"Yes, or something like it."

It was therefore evident that this had been a rough draft of the message which was transmitted.

The detective therefore took another blank and wrote this message:

"To AGENT BRITISH-AMERICAN PRESS ASS.,
London, England:—

"Story of Count D'Arville's arrival in Europe fake. Has not left America. Wanted for great crime."

This he also signed with the superintendent's name and gave it to the agent for transmission.

He then tore up the first message written and left the office, chuckling to himself that he had checkmated the conspirator in at least one of his wily tricks.

Still, the detective was in a quandary as to which way to move.

He was satisfied that his man was still upon American soil, but the question was which way to look for him.

Thinking it just possible that he might have again visited his friend, the lawyer, Thad hastened back to the office.

"Ah," exclaimed the little man, "were you in time?"

"Plenty of time," replied the detective dryly.

"Oh, you saw him, then?"

"No, and for an excellent reason."

"How is that?"

"He did not sail on the Umbria."

"What? Oh," the lawyer hastened to modify, "he has probably changed his mind, and will go upon another steamer, later."

"In my opinion, he never intended to sail, and either told you that he intended to do so for a purpose, or—"

Thad checked himself in time. In his perturbed condition, he was on the point of saying something which would have reflected upon the lawyer himself, for he more than half-suspected that he knew more about Munson's whereabouts than he was willing to tell.

"What do you mean?" demanded the little attorney, somewhat ruffled at Thad's insinuating tone.

"Look at that," handing him the crumpled cablegram. "Is that handwriting familiar to you?"

The other took the message and scanned it curiously.

"Why, what on earth can this mean?" he finally exclaimed.

"That is what I should like to know. It is Livingstone's writing, is it not?"

"Yes, it seems to be, although it is blurred, so that it is hard to say for certain."

"There is one point which will prove it, however. Did you ever know of him assuming the title of Count D'Arville?"

"My dear sir," cried the little lawyer, looking up quickly, "that is his legitimate title. He goes by his family name of Livingstone, as a rule, as he considers the title cumbersome in common society."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DIAMOND TRAIL.

This information was somewhat astonishing to the detective, who never entertained any other idea than that the title of Count D'Arville was, like his numerous other aliases, assumed or put off as occasion called.

"He is really a nobleman, then, is he?" he asked.

"Certainly," replied the lawyer, grinning affably; "and belongs to one of the oldest and noblest French families."

Thad was about to ask if Snow was aware of the real character of the man, but concluded that it might not be good policy. Unable to divest his mind of the idea that the little practitioner had some knowledge of Munson's ruse, however, he could not avoid saying:

"I say, were you not aware that Livingstone never intended to go abroad on the Umbria?"

The lawyer was hot in an instant.

"What do you mean, sir?" he demanded, jumping from his chair and placing himself in a threatening attitude in front of the detective. "Do you mean to insinuate that I would lie to you, sir? What do you mean, sir? What do you mean?"

"Oh, keep your shirt on, my friend!" urged Thad, blandly. "Don't imagine you are going to scare anybody. I frequently eat a man of your size for lunch, and, as I was compelled to lunch rather lightly today, I might take a notion to swallow you whole, and that would be uncomfortable, I'm sure."

The little fellow seemed for the first time to realize Thad's immense size and muscular development, and calmed down somewhat, and then began to mutter, in an angry undertone:

"You don't want to come here with any insulting insinuations."

"No?" smiled the shadow-hunter.

"No!" roared the other.

"What is liable to be the consequences if I should take it into my head to do so?"

"Why, I'll—I'll—have you arrested."

"Is that all? Well, I'll leave you for the present, Mr. Frost, but I may have occasion to call upon you again. Good—"

"What's that you called me?" screeched the little attorney, flying into a rage again.

"Frost."

"Snow, sir, Snow! My name is Snow, not Frost!"

"Oh, well; it's all one. Cool sort of stuff, anyway. Good-day, Mr. Sleet!"

"Don't you call me that, sir!" screamed the lawyer, now beside himself with rage. "My name is Snow, sir, and I allow no man to come into my office playing upon my name. Get out!"

"Certainly, with pleasure, Mr. Hail," moving toward the door and laughing. "Ta-ta, old Icicle!"

This was too much for the irritable man who sunk back in his chair in something approaching an apoplectic state:

As Thad was about to close the door some glittering object sticking in the mat attracted his attention.

Thinking it nothing but a bit of tin-foil or something of the kind he moved it with his cane, when he saw that it was a piece of jewelry of some sort.

He then stooped and picked it up, and found it to be a diamond stud, the stone of which being of uncommon size and purity of water.

It at once occurred to him that the gem belonged to the conspirator, and a novel scheme flashed into his mind.

He would go at once to a morning paper, or several papers, and advertise the stud!

This would bring forth an answer from the loser, and, in the event of its being the property of Munson, there might be a chance of tracing him in that way.

Little Snow was too much agitated to notice what had passed, and the Special closed the door and made his way out of the building.

He then visited a number of leading dailies and inserted an advertisement in each, giving a minute description of the stud.

This done—it being close upon six o'clock—he went home, hoping to obtain a little rest that night, which he had not enjoyed for some time past.

After dinner he retired to his private office to enjoy a smoke and read the evening papers.

He had been thus engaged for some time—until about nine o'clock, in fact—and, already beginning to feel drowsy, was just thinking about going to bed, when the servant knocked on his door.

Thad bade her enter, when she informed him that there was a woman at the door who wished to see him.

"Did she give no name?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"What does she look like?"

"She looks as if she might be a poor woman."

"Some poor creature in distress, I suppose. Here, give her this, and tell her I can't see her to-night."

And he handed the servant a handful of small change to give the supposed mendicant.

The servant went away, but soon returned

with the information that the woman was no beggar, that she would not take the money, and that she must see the detective on a matter which was of as much importance to him as it was to her.

"Oh, well, let her come," assented Thad, wearily, "and let us see what she has to say."

The servant again retired, and soon there was another timid rap at Burr's door.

Opening it, he found a tall woman draped from head to foot in a rather shabby waterproof.

As the weather was fine, he concluded at once that the garment was worn as a disguise.

And the supposition was verified a moment later, when, after being ushered into the room, she threw back the waterproof, exhibiting a dress of expensive material and fashionably cut. Indeed, the woman's whole attire betokened competence and refinement.

She appeared to be a lady of something more than forty and still more than ordinarily good-looking, with a rich olive complexion, bright, handsome eyes and an intellectual face.

As soon as the door was closed she spoke in low, confidential tones, her language bearing that of an educated person:

"I am not mistaken that you are the detective—Mr. Burr, who is working upon the case of the conspiracy in which Miss Melrose of Philadelphia was defrauded of a million dollars, am I?"

Thad was struck dumb for an instant.

He had conducted the case from beginning to end with such absolute secrecy that he did not imagine a soul in the world, beyond the heiress, Beach and Adair, knew anything about it. It had not even got into the papers, which was very remarkable, considering the magnitude of the money involved. Secrecy had been maintained, partly by request of Miss Melrose herself, and partly because the detective realized that that was the only way in which to deal with the wily villain he had to contend with.

And now for this strange woman to come to him with an apparent knowledge of the whole affair, he was stunned.

After a moment's hesitation, he answered:

"You are not mistaken in supposing this, madam, although I am at a loss to know, first, how you knew that the conspiracy had been perpetrated; second, that I had anything to do with trying to trace the perpetrator, and finally, how you knew where to find me."

The woman smiled faintly, and replied:

"I do not wonder that you should be surprised at my knowledge of all you mention, and for that reason let me explain. Or, first, let me tell you who I am. My name is Livingstone, and I am the wife of the man who perpetrated that fraud!"

Now Thad was astonished, but he could only shrug his shoulders and bow in assent.

"My husband," she continued, "deserted me nearly five years ago, and I have been on his track ever since."

"And you have never been able to find him?"

"Oh, I have found him several times, but I would no sooner find him than he would slip away from me again. He has sent me money in some mysterious way from time to time, but I have never been able to learn his place of residence for any length of time together."

"Where did you live when he deserted you?"

"In Philadelphia."

"That is his home, then?"

"It has been for a number of years, although he originally came from France."

"Go on."

"By the merest accident I ran across a young man whom I had known since his childhood—his name is Beach—and in the course of our conversation I mentioned the fact of my husband's desertion, and when I described him, and mentioned that he was Count D'Arville, the young man opened his eyes very wide and said: 'Why, I know him. He is the rascal who robbed my cousin of a million dollars!'

"This astounded me. Although I knew my husband to be capable of committing almost any crime, I was astonished that he should have been able to procure so enormous

a sum. So he told me about his cousin, about how the conspiracy was planned and carried out, and at length where his cousin lived. He also told me that a great New York detective was working on the case, but said the name was Lumsden.

"I first called upon the cousin, but she could tell me nothing that I did not already know. Then I came to New York, where I arrived this afternoon, and went directly to Police Headquarters. When I asked for a detective named Lumsden, the superintendent informed me there was no such person on the force. But when I told him you were working on a case over in Philadelphia, he smiled and said: 'Ah, yes; that is Thad Burr, I'll wager a nickel. I have heard that he was over there on some sort of business. Just like the sly dog!' Then he directed me here."

"Well, you are something of a detective yourself, madam," laughed Thad, "to have been able to trace me in that roundabout fashion. But, what can I do for you?"

"First of all, I want to ask you whether you have found any trace of him?"

"Yes, and no. I have been upon a very hot scent several times—twice this very day; but he is as far out of my reach at present as if he were in Jericho."

He then related the incident of the cablegram, and of Munson's (we shall still call him that) visit to the lawyer's office ten minutes after he left.

And this reminded him of the diamond stud; so, taking it from his pocket, he handed it to the woman with the inquiry:

"Did you ever see that before?"

She merely glanced at it when she exclaimed:

"Gracious, yes! That is Leander's. Where did you get it?"

Thad related the circumstances of the finding of the stud, and the woman went on:

"That is one of a set I gave him ten years ago. I paid five hundred dollars for the set. What are you going to do with it?"

But instead of answering directly, the detective observed:

"I presume, then, he prizes them very highly?"

"I do not know. If he does not prize them any higher than he does the giver, he does not put much store by them."

"Still, it appears that he has worn them pretty regularly. He must have had them on when he went to the lawyer's office. And, considering that he must value them highly, I have hit upon a plan to discover his hiding-place through the medium of this stud."

"How is that?"

Thad told her about having advertised the stud in the morning papers, at which she shook her head and said:

"I don't believe it will be a success."

"Why?"

"He is too cunning for that."

"Well, there is nothing like trying, anyway."

"I think I know of a still better way."

"What is that?"

"Insert a personal in the paper saying that Hortense, the daughter of Count D'Arville, is very ill, tell where she is to be found, and then I will tell you where to find her, and you must entice her away to some place where you can keep her under your eye."

CHAPTER XXII.

A CLEVER RUSE.

The mention of a daughter as a means of luring the culprit into a trap attracted Thad at once.

He knew that, with even the vilest criminal, there was no bait which could be held out that would entice him so quickly as his own child.

"Where is this daughter?" he asked eagerly.

"It is unnecessary to mention the place now," she answered. "I will lead you there at the proper time."

"She is in your custody, then?"

"On the contrary, she is not."

"In his, then?"

"Yes; he has her with some friends of his."

"Pardon me: she is also your daughter, I take it?"

"She is."

"Is she more attached to you or to him?"

"She is more attached to him, and for that reason you will have to do the enticing. She would not go with me."

"How do you account for this?"

"Oh, he has prejudiced her against me. You probably know something of his art of fascinating people and winning them to him."

"Yes; I have had occasion to know something of it. You are not allowed to see her, then?"

"No, but if she thought I was sick or in trouble she would come to me."

"What is your plan, then?"

"For you to go to her and tell her that I am in a certain place, and very ill. You may select your own place—some hotel or respectable boarding house, and when you get her there provide some means of detaining her, even if you have to place her under arrest. Then insert the personal I mentioned, and you may be sure he will not be long in coming to her, if he is still in this country."

"Still, there is something extremely cruel in the ruse, after all. I hardly feel that I can do it."

"Then you do not care to catch him?"

"I certainly do."

"Well, I can tell you, this is about the only way by which you will be able to accomplish it. Besides, no harm can come to the child, and so far as the cruelty to him is concerned, if you knew the amount of cruelty he has inflicted upon others, I do not believe you would hesitate very long, on his account."

Thad reflected for some time, and at length said:

"Well, I see no great objection to the scheme, if it will result in his capture. But do you feel so bitterly toward him that you would like to see him imprisoned?"

"Yes, indeed! I have ample reasons for wishing him imprisoned, aside from revenge. It will not be until then that I shall gain my rights in certain property which he is keeping from me, not to mention the possession of my daughter. Once he is confined so that he can no longer bring his influence to bear on her, I feel certain she will soon become reconciled to me."

"When would it suit you to take me to this place where your daughter is?"

"This very night, if it suits you."

Thad ruminated for some time, considered his fatigue and the probable amount of work such an expedition would involve, and at length asked:

"Is it far from here?"

"No, only a short distance," she replied. "It will not take us more than ten minutes to reach the place, if we take a vehicle."

After another pause, he said:

"Very well. I do not know that it is absolutely necessary that we should go to-night; but as you seem to desire it, we will go."

"Ah, but it is necessary to go to-night."

"How so?"

"I have learned that he intends to take her away early to-morrow."

"Would it not do as well to watch the house to-morrow, then, and when he comes after her, take him then?"

"If he came after her himself, yes; but he is not likely to do that. He is too cunning to run that risk."

"In that case it is certainly essential that we should go to-night," said Thad, rising. "I shall be at your service in a moment."

Excusing himself, the detective withdrew to another room for his hat and such other articles as he was likely to need upon the expedition, and in ten minutes returned with the announcement that he was ready to travel.

As the woman had not alluded to the matter, Thad was surprised when he reached the street and she said:

"I have my own carriage here, sir," at the same time walking toward a carriage which stood at the curb.

A faint suspicion flashed through the detective's mind that all was not right—that the woman was about to lead him into a trap; but it quickly passed and he followed her to the carriage and, after assisting her to enter, got in himself.

The woman had given the direction to the driver, and the vehicle rolled away.

It was a closed carriage, but Thad kept a sharp look-out through the window to see where they were going.

They kept in an easterly direction for some time, and he at last saw that they were coming into the low districts of the East Side.

He was surprised at this, and finally said:

"It is strange that your husband should keep his daughter in this neighborhood."

"There is nothing strange about it, when you consider the character of the man and his desperate desire to keep my daughter away from me."

"He considers her safer over here, then, than in a respectable portion of the city?"

"Undoubtedly. Besides, the people in this locality are more easily induced to do his bidding when he desires any desperate work performed."

She had scarcely ceased speaking when the carriage stopped and she observed.

"Here we are."

Thad was at a loss how to proceed, and asked:

"What mode of procedure do you propose?"

"That is the house," she remarked, pointing up at a tall, dingy-looking tenement. "You will probably find the door open, in which case you can proceed right up-stairs to the fourth floor and knock at the first door you come to after reaching the landing. When the attendant comes to the door, which will be either an old man or an old woman, say that you have a message from Count D'Arville for Miss Hortense. This will not fail to bring the girl to the door, and when she comes, just whisper to her that her mother is lying very ill at one of the city hospitals. That will be sufficient to entice her away, and you can leave the rest to her."

It was with no little trepidation that the detective alighted and proceeded in the direction of the tenement.

There was scarcely any light about the door, but after stumbling up a short flight of broken steps he was rewarded by finding the door ajar.

He pushed along into the still darker corridor and groped his way till his hand came in contact with a stair railing when he began to ascend.

The character of the place was indexed by the vile smells and the sound of boisterous voices within the tenements which he passed.

After a toilsome climb he finally reached the fourth landing and, although the darkness was too intense for him to see, he at length succeeded in finding the door by dint of groping along the wall with his hands, and knocked.

After a brief delay the door was opened, although the attendant must have walked with extreme lightness, as not a footstep had he heard previous to the opening.

An exceedingly dim light shone out from within, but it was sufficient for him to make out that the person at the door was an old woman, although he could not discern what she looked like.

"Wot's wantin'?" growled the old woman.

"I have a message from Count d'Arville for his daughter, Miss Hortense," replied Thad.

"Wot's the message?"

"The count is very ill."

The woman hesitated a moment, and then growled more gruffly than before:

"Is dis true, or is it one o' dem stories got up by de mudder to 'tice de gal away?"

"All I know, madam, is that the count is very ill, and requested me to come and inform his daughter of the state of his health."

"Wal, I'll tell her," grumbled the woman, "but mind, she don't leave dis house. It's ag'in' de boss's orders."

With which she turned and hobbled back into the room, leaving the detective standing at the door.

Thad at once foresaw trouble, and also realized that he had come upon his mission without proper preparation.

If he had known before leaving his home what the strange woman's plan of operation was to be, he would have provided himself with an order, properly signed by the count, whose signature he could easily have copied from the cablegram in his possession.

But as it was, there appeared little hope of

inducing these people to allow the girl to depart with him.

In a very short time the outlines of a trim feminine figure appeared, and, approaching the door, strained her eyes to discern who it was that had brought the message.

And then she asked:

"Do you come from my father, sir?"

"Yes," replied the detective, shuddering at his own falsehood, although circumstances had forced it upon him.

"And you say he is very ill?"

"Very—not expected to live, in fact."

"That is strange. He was here this afternoon, and he was in perfect health then."

"Yes, his illness came upon him with surprising suddenness. In fact, it has been no more than an hour since he was taken."

"Where is my father?" she asked, still incredulously.

Thad then saw that he had failed to carry out the programme as prescribed by the woman, as she had instructed him to whisper that she was ill, but under the circumstances he decided that his present mode of procedure was the better one.

"At the house of a friend, in Forty-second street," he answered.

Thad had a friend living in Forty-second street, with whom he knew it would be entirely safe to leave the girl.

She thought a moment, and then asked:

"Did he request me to come to him?"

"Yes, miss. He said that if you wished to see your father alive you should come at once."

After another brief silence she said:

"Well, I'll see."

She then returned inside, and the detective's ears were soon after regaled with the sound of loud and ill natured talking.

This continued for some time, and at length he heard the girl in an emphatic tone declare:

"Well, I'm going, I don't care what you say. I sha'n't let my papa die without seeing him."

At this there was an outburst from apparently two persons, whom Thad concluded were the old man and old woman whom the strange woman had alluded to.

A little later the sounds grew nearer, and Thad realized that all three speakers were approaching him.

And then he heard the girl say:

"What is the use of talking? if he dies he will leave all his money to me, and you shall have half of it. So you ought to be satisfied with that."

And the promise appeared to satisfy them, for she came on directly to the door.

The detective then noticed that she had on a hat and cloak, and as soon as she was near enough she said:

"I am ready. I'll go with you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN A DILEMMA.

It did not occur to Thad until he and the girl were descending the stairs that they should meet the latter's mother, and he wondered what the effect of the surprise would be, and whether or no it would cause the girl to change her mind about going.

For that reason he was considerably uneasy all the way down, and considered seriously whether it would not be better to procure another vehicle.

But, after a little thought, he concluded that the woman herself must have considered the subject beforehand, and had decided that it would be safe to bring her daughter into her presence in this manner.

When they finally reached the street, however, there was a great surprise in store for the detective, for the carriage, woman and all, had disappeared!

He could not tell what to make of it; but, upon the whole, concluded that it was for the best.

The worst of it was, though, in this locality it was not possible to procure a vehicle, and he hardly knew what excuse to make to the girl for the absence of any means of conveyance, as she would naturally expect him to have a carriage if he came from her father.

He was not long in a quandary, however, and said, in a tone of well-feigned annoyance:

"Well, that is a pretty trick my cabman has played upon me."

"Did you tell him to wait for you?" she asked.

"Certainly," was his reply; "but the stupid fellow must have misunderstood me."

"Oh, well," we can walk up as far as Third avenue, where we can probably get a cab."

Thad noticed by this and subsequent conversation that she was one of those independent, self-reliant women, peculiar to Americans, whom it is not easy to either lead astray or to persuade against their better judgment.

And he wondered that such a person should allow herself to be kept in comparative imprisonment; as well also he wondered how he was going to manage her.

As soon as they should arrive at the house of his friend in Forty-second street she would expect to find her father there, and not finding him, she would undoubtedly raise a rumpus.

How was he to manage the affair?

Not being able to decide, he finally concluded to trust to luck.

While this had been running through his mind the girl had kept up a continual run of talk upon various subjects, little of which the detective comprehended on account of his own absorption in his own meditations, and thus they finally reached Third avenue.

Here they had no trouble in getting a cab, which they entered and drove to Forty-second street.

All the way along Thad tried to invent some story for the benefit of the girl when they should reach his friend's house, but for the life of him he could think of nothing suitable, so that when the cab halted in front of the house he had still not made up his mind what excuse to offer for the absence of her father.

However, realizing that his friend would require to be prepared for the girl's reception, he left her in the cab while he went in and enlightened his friends upon the matter.

When this had been arranged he returned to the cab and escorted the girl into the house.

As soon as she was within she naturally asked for her father.

Thad's friend, who was a man of sixty, and of rather reverential appearance, besides being very quick-witted, assumed the role of physician on the spur of the moment and answered:

"I am afraid it will not be safe to allow any one to go to him just now, but he will undoubtedly rally in a little while—as soon as the medicine operates—and then there will be no danger. In the mean time it would be a good idea for the young lady to retire to a room which the servant will show her, and as soon as her father is in a fit condition to be seen she might be called."

Hortense, who proved to be a very sensible young person, readily agreed to this, and was shown to a room—one of the best in the house.

This was a temporary relief to the worried detective, but he could but be apprehensive as to how the ruse was to terminate.

When she was safely stowed in the room, however, Thad hastened to the nearest branch of some of the morning papers, and, as the strange woman had suggested, inserted an advertisement in the personal column, stating that Hortense, the daughter of Count D'Arville was very ill at such a number, Forty-second street.

It was midnight when he returned, and Warren, Thad's old friend, said to him:

"That is a queer girl you brought here."

"How is that?" asked the detective.

"When told that her father could not be seen at once she went meekly to the room assigned to her."

"Has she not asked since to see him?"

"Yes—once or twice; and having been informed at the last that she would not be able to see him before morning, she retired without another word, the servant tells me."

"Gone to bed?"

"Yes."

"Did not ask to go home?"

"Never."

"Perhaps the hospitality here is better," suggested Thad.

"I shouldn't wonder."

For the purpose of being on hand in the

event of the conspirator's calling at an early hour the next morning, the detective also lodged in the house.

The family were early risers; but, long before any one else was stirring Hortense was heard in her room and occasionally indulging in a snatch of a song.

She came down to breakfast when called, cheerful and bright, and asked in a matter-of-fact way about her father's health.

When assured that he was so much better that he had arisen and gone off on some important business call before any one else was up, she smiled and said:

"Just like papa—nearly dead one day and up the next. It is strange, though, that he did not stop long enough to see me before he went."

"Oh, he intends to come back very soon," assured Thad, who feared she already suspected something of the truth.

She offered no comment upon this, and when she had finished her breakfast returned to her room without any request or evincing any desire to go home.

When she had disappeared from the dining-room the detective and his friend discussed their plan of action, and it was agreed that Thad should have a room next to that of the girl, where he would remain quietly during the day, and that if Munson should call he was to be sent directly to his daughter's room.

This would give the detective an opportunity of overhearing any conversation which might pass between them, and also to capture the conspirator.

But the morning passed and Munson did not appear.

And, strange to say, during all this time Thad never overheard the least sound emanating from the girl's room.

"She must have fallen asleep," he mused. "I cannot conceive how any one could remain so quiet otherwise."

About noon Mr. Warren came up to see how the detective were getting on, and to see whether there were any developments.

Thad remarked about the quietness of the girl in the next room, and while they were still on the subject a servant came to the door and announced that the girl was gone!

"Gone?" cried Thad in dismay. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir," replied the servant.

"Perhaps she is somewhere else about the house," suggested Mr. Warren. "Take a look about, Sarah, and see if you can find her."

Meanwhile Thad and his friend went to the room for the purpose of satisfying themselves.

The girl was certainly not there.

As the detective looked about the room the first thing that attracted his attention was a copy of that morning's *Herald* lying on the dressing-table and near it a note.

Before examining the note he glanced at the newspaper, and noticed that on the margin of the first column of the first page, where the personals are printed, there was a pencil mark opposite a paragraph.

It wanted but a glance to show him that the paragraph was nothing less than the advertisement he himself had inserted the previous evening regarding the illness of Hortense.

"She's a keen one," he observed, pointing out the personal to his friend.

The latter read it over and exclaimed:

"Why, it's the one you inserted, isn't it?"

"So it is."

"Then she knows your secret?"

"Undoubtedly; but, what puzzles me is, where she got the paper and how she came to think of looking in the personal column."

"She must have sent one of the servants for the paper, I presume, or else have gone out herself before any one else was up; and as for looking in the personal column, it would seem that she must have had some suspicion of the plot in advance."

"Yes," smiled the detective, "which would seem to indicate that she possesses something of the cunning of her father. But let us see what her note says."

"Oh, she left a note, did she?" cried his friend as Thad took it up. "What has she to say?"

Thad read the note aloud, which was as follows:

"DEAR MR. DETECTIVE:—

"I suspected something of this kind when you came to the flat and announced the illness of papa; and my curiosity to find out what your trick was, induced me to go with you. Somehow I suspected that there would be another side to your scheme, and somehow I associated it with the morning papers; so as soon as it was light enough this morning I went out and bought a *Herald*. This confirmed my suspicion, and while you were all still at breakfast I decided to slip away.

"You need not go to the old place for me, however, for long before you get this I shall be in another city. You are a great detective, Mr. Burr, but not quite sharp enough for

Yours truly,

"HORTENSE."

"Well, she is a keen one!" muttered Thad. "I presume she will go directly to her father and notify him that the advertisement was a hoax, and that will lead him to also suspect that the one I inserted regarding the diamond is a catch. She has done me one favor, however."

"What is that?"

"She has given me a hint that her father is in another city."

"But what city?"

"Philadelphia, of course!"

"But, this may be, like your own ruse, only a ruse."

"That is true enough, and for that reason I shall first call at the tenement in Avenue A and ascertain whether she has returned there or not."

Thad left the house and, taking a cab, had himself driven to the location in question.

He was met at the door by the old woman, as before, who asked in an ill-tempered voice:

"W're's 'Ortense?"

"That is exactly what I came here to inquire about," answered the detective. "Has she not returned?"

"Oh, get out!" snarled the old woman. "you knows very well w're the gal is."

"Indeed I do not! Has she really not come back?"

"No, she 'asn't," snapped the woman. "Don't you know w're she is now?"

"I pledge you my word I don't. She left the house where her father lay sick early this morning, and nobody knew when or where she went."

The old woman mused a moment, meanwhile muttered to herself, and at length looked up and said:

"Nen, I reckon she's went to her dad's place in Philadelphia for suthin'."

"Possibly," rejoined Thad in a tone of unconcern. "By the way, do you know what his Philadelphia address is?"

"I reckon its 'ere," answered the old woman, turning and hobbling back into the room, whence she soon returned with an envelope upon which was written:

"MR. LEANDER C. LIVINGSTONE,
Girard avenue, Philadelphia."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A CLOSE CALL.

As this was the address of the house where Livingstone or Munson, had formerly lived, the detective's eager anticipation suddenly fell flat.

There might something be learned, however, and he asked:

"Does the girl write to her father pretty regularly?"

"Most every day or two."

"And still to this address?"

"Thet I couldn't say. Thet's the only address that I knows anything 'bout."

So he was no better off than before.

Leaving the tenement he drove to the address in Ninth avenue where he had instructed the loser of the diamond stud to call in his advertisement, to ascertain whether any one had yet called.

No one had, and he constituted his friend, Brower—who lived at the place, and who had done some detective work under Thad—a detective with power to detain any one who might call.

"Hold anybody that comes," he ordered; "and if the right one comes serve him with

this warrant and take him to the police station and lock him up."

Here the detective handed him the warrant, and then went on:

"If you need any assistance you are entitled to call in a policeman to help you."

"That won't be necessary," replied the other, "as my brother is here, and I reckon the two of us can handle about anything that goes on two legs."

"Very well; do the best you can, and, if you effect the capture, your reward will be a big one."

"What for a looking man is this you are after?"

"Oh, I forgot," and Thad gave a minute description of the conspirator.

"I have got to go to Philadelphia, but I shall probably be back either to-night or tomorrow," concluded the detective, and then took his leave.

He hurried to the depot and took the first train for the City of Brotherly Love.

He arrived late in the afternoon and proceeded directly to the lodgings he had engaged, in Girard avenue.

Little Miss Jerome met him at the door and with almost the second word exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Livingstone has been here, and wanted his room again, but of course we couldn't let him have it."

"I wish you had," declared the detective.

"Why! Don't you want to stop here any longer?"

"Oh, yes; but if he had taken the room I might perhaps have been lucky enough to find him."

"Why, do you still want to find him, Mr. Lumaden?"

"Very much, indeed."

"Well, I'm sure I don't know where he is stopping. He didn't give us his new address. Indeed, he said he didn't know what his new one would be. And he hadn't been gone more than half an hour when a young lady who claimed to be his daughter came to inquire if he were here."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir; but I can hardly believe that she is his daughter."

"Why?"

"She did not look much like him, for one thing, and then she was not dressed like a daughter of a gentleman like him would be likely to dress."

"And you did not know where to direct her?"

"No, sir."

"Did she intimate where she would be likely to go in case she did not find her father?"

"Yes; she said she would be compelled to return to New York if she did not find him."

Thad went to his room, and made a few preparations; then, leaving the house, he made his way to the Belmont House.

After making inquiry of the clerk as to whether Munson had been there, or was stopping at the house, and finding that neither was the case, he inquired if either Beach or Adair had been seen about the place.

The clerk assured him that neither of the young men in question had been seen about, so far as he knew.

The detective thereupon started to leave the hotel, but as he was just going out, a person whom he was passing touched him on the arm.

Thad turned and looked at the man, only to find that he was a total stranger.

Thad experienced a slight twinge of apprehension, as he recalled the strange woman coming to his house the previous night.

And then, before he had recovered from his surprise sufficiently to ask the stranger what he wanted, the latter leaned forward and whispered:

"May I see you in private, for a moment?"

Burr looked the fellow over once more, and saw that he was a tall and rather well-built person, but was clad in a strange combination of old-fashioned clothes, every article of which was at least two sizes too small for him, and there was something about his shaggy eyebrows and beard that led the detective to believe them false. Furthermore, he guessed that the stranger was otherwise made up, although it was skillfully done.

"What do you wish to see me about?" asked Thad, with a suspicious glance at his questioner.

"It is a private matter, and must not be whispered except in a strictly private place."

The Special glanced him over once more, and then asked:

"Who are you?"

The stranger glanced cautiously about him to make sure that no one was within hearing, and then, putting his mouth close to the detective's ear, whispered:

"Adair!"

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Thad, involuntarily. "Well, come on; we'll find a private place."

And, returning to the desk, asked for the use of a room for a few minutes.

As soon as they reached the room and the bolt was drawn in the door, Adair turned upon the detective and asked:

"Where've you been?"

"To New York."

"You disappeared so suddenly that we thought something had happened. Any success?"

"Very little. We have a slick customer to deal with."

"That is true, but, if you had remained here, we should have had him bagged ere this."

"How is that?"

"Beach and I have had him cornered half a dozen times, but he always managed to slip away. If would have been different if you had been here. You see, this thing has at last come to the knowledge of the police, and although they are keeping it dead dark, they have discovered that we are mixed up in it, and we've got to keep so shady that it is impossible to do much good work."

"Why didn't you go to the police and make a clean breast of it at once, and offer to assist in making the capture?"

"It would never do, my friend."

"Why?"

"They would simply lock us up, and that would be an end of it."

"So you have kept shady, eh?"

"Yes; I dare not go abroad except in disguise, and as for poor Beach, who does not possess sufficient skill to disguise himself, he has to remain under cover during the day, and if he comes out at all it is after dark, and then he keeps the shady side of the street."

"Beach is at the same old place, I suppose?"

"No; the poor old fellow has had to change his lodgings for fear the police would get onto him, and has taken lodgings in one of the toughest neighborhoods in town."

"You don't tell me?"

"Fact, I assure you. I was round thre this morning, and it made my heart bleed to see the poor old chap so wretchedly housed, although, to tell you the truth, I am little better off myself."

"Both pretty well broke, I suppose?"

"That's the racket—dead broke."

"Well, suppose we go round and see Beach."

"Very well; but, first let me tell you what we have done since you went away."

"Go on," replied the detective, reseating himself.

"We spied the old rascal on the street the very night you disappeared and shadowed him. We chased him along for some distance, and found where he hung out. So we planned to call upon him the next day, but when Beach came to think the matter over he concluded it wouldn't be safe for him to go out in the shine, and, as I didn't want to go alone, we concluded to put it off till last night. So last night we called at the house to which we had followed him, but only to be told that he had moved, and the people of the house did not know where he had gone to, so we had to give it up. You see, if you had been here, you could have nailed him at once."

"That is true, and I am very sorry I wasn't here. But, is that all you have done or learned?"

"That is all."

"Then let us go round and see Beach, and together we will talk over our plans for the future. To-morrow I shall call at Police Headquarters and arrange matters so that you can both go abroad without fear of arrest."

They left the hotel and, taking a street car, rode as far as Juniper street. Walking along this for the distance of half a dozen blocks until they came to the most disreputable portion of it, Adair turned into a narrow passage leading back from the street.

The passage was dark and ill-smelling, and when they had traversed it for about fifty feet they came out in a dirty court, at the back of which the outlines of a row of tumble-down buildings could be vaguely seen in the dim light.

"This is not a very inviting place," observed Adair in a low tone. "But the poor devi! thought he would be safer from discovery here. Besides the rent is small."

"It showed poor discretion on his part, so far as the chance of discovery is concerned. He would stand a thousand times less chance of being discovered in one of the fashionable streets."

"I have no doubt of it," mused the actor; "but—"

By this time they had reached the door of the tenement, and a woman came out, and as she passed Adair she gave him a look that made his blood run cold.

Dark as it was, the blaze of the great dark eyes which she turned upon him was distinct enough, and the sight caused him to shudder and grow silent.

The young man did not move a step until the woman was well past him, although he turned his head to follow her with his eyes, and then turning to his companion, heaved a deep sigh and muttered with a trembling voice:

"Did you see her?"

"Yes; who is it?"

"If it isn't Hortense Munson, it was her ghost?" muttered the other.

Thad made no comment, and the two passed on into a dirty hallway, and thence up two flights of dark, rickety stairs.

Adair knocked at a door, and, after having repeated it two or three times and receiving no response, tried the knob.

The door proved to be unlocked; so he opened it and walked in, followed by the detective.

The apartment was in total darkness, and after calling half a dozen times, Adair said:

"I suppose the poor fellow has gone out. Let us make a light and look about."

With that he struck a match upon his trowsers and held it up to look for a lamp.

As the light of the match flared up and illuminated the room the two men caught sight at the same instant of a horrible spectacle.

It was the body of Albert Beach, with upturned ghastly face, and near him a pool of blood!

CHAPTER XXV.

DAMNING EVIDENCE.

"My God!" was the involuntary exclamation that came from both men at once.

"What does this mean?" gasped Thad.

"It means murder," declared Adair.

"There is no doubt about that; but, who is the murderer?"

The match had burned out by this time and all was again darkness, and Adair did not answer till he had struck another match.

Then, looking about and espousing a lamp on a table, he removed the chimney with nervous fingers and applied the lighted match to the wick.

The chimney was very dirty and the lamp did not make much light, but it was a trifle more brilliant than the match had been.

Then turning and surveying the body of his dead friend again, he resumed:

"Yes, the poor fellow has been murdered, and I haven't far to go to find out who the murderer was."

Here he walked up, stooped over and felt the pulse of the prostrate man.

"Yes, dead," he repeated; "but still warm. That proves beyond a cavil that she did it, as I thought."

"You don't mean to say," ventured the detective, "that—"

"Yes, I do," interrupted Adair, almost savagely. "Who else could have done it—even if she had had no provocation and had not threatened to do it."

While he was speaking the detective had approached and examined the fallen man's pulse.

As he straightened up again he said:

"But it is hard to believe that a young girl like that could be guilty of anything so horrible."

"Young girl?" repeated Adair.

"Certainly. She cannot be more than eighteen."

"Eighteen?" echoed the other, sneeringly. "More than fifty! I'll wager she is not a day under fifty, and I'd like to have a dollar for every day she is over fifty."

Thad began to see there was a misunderstanding somewhere, and said:

"Oh, I thought you meant—"

"I meant Hortense Munson," interrupted the actor, "the woman whom we met at the door."

"But, isn't she Munson's daughter?" ventured Thad.

"Munson's daughter? More like his mother! No; as a matter of fact, she is his wife."

Thad began to see daylight.

This, then, was the same woman who had come to his house the previous night!

"Ah, I see," he exclaimed at last. "This is the woman who came to my house and wanted to know whether I was not working upon the case of her husband, and then induced me to go to where her daughter was being detained, as she said, by her husband, and entice her away to another place."

He then related the adventure with the strange woman and her daughter, and concluded by saying:

"So I was under the impression that this was the daughter."

"No; this was the mother, but they bear a very strong resemblance to each other."

"What had she against Beach that she desired to kill him?"

"I don't know what the original grievance was—but there was an old grudge, and when she found that he was engaged in trying to catch her husband, she swore that she would kill him."

"That must have been before I went away?"

"The same day, I think."

"But the thing seems strange, for she talked to me as if she were anxious to have her husband put out of the way. She said that she would never be able to get her rights, or have any peace of mind until he was locked up."

"All guff, I assure you. Munson has no more potent ally than that wife of his, who is ready to commit any crime that he is. In fact, I do not believe he would have done this thing, while, as you see, she has done it."

"Well, we had better notify the police, and let them remove the poor fellow's remains from this horrible place."

As the detective stooped over the prostrate man again, he noticed something which he had overlooked before.

In the right hand, which was tightly clenched, were held a wisp of long, black hair!

Calling Adair's attention to the discovery, he asked:

"Is not her hair black?"

"Black as a raven's wing," muttered Adair glaring at the ghastly sight. "Yes, that is her hair—there is no room for doubt about that. The poor old fellow gave her a fight, anyway."

This led Thad to examine the manner of his coming to his death, which up to this time he had neglected to do.

The bosom of the murdered man's shirt was clotted with blood, and the Special had no difficulty in discovering that there was a bullet wound in the vicinity of the heart.

When he had called the other man's attention to this he was greatly surprised, and said:

"That is strange. I imagined from the presence of the hair in his hand that they had been at close quarters and that she had probably done her work with a knife."

"Oh, as to that," explained Thad, "she might have shot him, and then before he had lost his strength, he might have rushed upon her, with view to revenge."

"Ah, that is it. Anyway, the evidence is pretty direct, don't you think so?"

"Damning, I should say."

"Well, let us go and notify the police."

"One moment. I want to look about a little and see if there are not more clues lying about."

Burr took up the lamp and started over the poor, wretchedly furnished room.

Aside from the miserable bed and a couple of broken chairs there was absolutely no furniture in the place.

Beach's valise, a tolerably respectable affair, sat in one corner, and appeared in strange contrast to its surroundings.

This was all there was to be found and the two men left the room.

"When they reached the hall, however, an idea occurred to the detective. He struck a match and held it near the floor and went groping about as if in search of something.

"What is it?" the other finally asked curiously.

"I don't know," smiled Thad. "It occurred to me that there might have been something dropped by the assassin, and it would be as reasonable to expect to find it in the hall as in the room."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when Adair exclaimed:

"There it is!" and he rushed forward and picked something from the floor.

By this time Thad's match had exhausted itself, and he asked:

"What is it?"

"The weapon that did the work, I reckon."

Burr quickly struck another match, and together they examined the weapon.

It was a Smith & Wesson seven-shooter of about thirty-two caliber, and one of the chambers was empty.

The pistol had a pearl handle and was silver-mounted, such as ladies usually carry.

As the match again died out the two men made their way down the stairs, Adair still holding the pistol in his hand.

Not a word passed between them till they reached the foot of the stairs and passed out into the court.

Then all of a sudden Adair uttered a horrified exclamation, and dropped the weapon to the ground.

"My God!" he cried.

"What is the matter?" asked the detective, picking up the revolver.

"Great Heaven!" ejaculated the other, again with a shudder. "What if anybody had seen me with that pistol in my hand?"

"They would probably have thought that you had been killing somebody," laughed Thad.

"And then suppose they had gone upstairs and seen that body?"

"It would have been a pretty clear case against you, my boy," rejoined Thad, still laughing at the fellow's consternation. "But how do we know that some one did not see you?"

"Great Scott! Do you imagine anything of the kind?"

And the young man whirled about with the velocity of lightning and peered back into the dark hall from which he had just emerged.

"If they did, they have pretty good eyes," said the detective. "Come on."

They started to leave the court and had already taken several steps along the narrow passage, when Adair, who had been rendered very nervous over the affair of the pistol, and who was watching in every direction for somebody to pounce upon him, suddenly clutched the detective's arm, convulsively.

Thad, who was in the advance, stopped to ascertain what was the matter. He found Adair pointing with trembling finger at something on the opposite side of the court.

"What is it?" demanded the detective, who was unable to see anything where his companion was pointing, except a low, dark line of broken board fence.

"Don't you see?" gasped the other in a tremulous voice.

"No, I confess that I see nothing."

"There, crouching by the fence!"

Thad ran his eyes along the dark line, and at length caught sight of what he supposed was the thing of terror to his companion.

"I see a shadow there," he at length said, "and that is all you see, I guess."

"But I saw it crouch there," persisted Adair.

"Are you sure?"

"Why, yes; it was dogging our steps when I first caught sight of it, and then when it saw that it was discovered, it ran and crouched where you see it."

As may be supposed this conversation had all been carried on in whispers, and although Thad did not put much credence in what the fellow said, on account of the state of terror he was in, it had taken enough hold on him to cause him a certain amount of uneasiness.

He hesitated a moment, meanwhile straining his eyes in the attempt to make out whether there was anything more than mere shadow there, and at length said:

"I can hardly believe that there is anything there; but to satisfy you I'll go over and see."

"Don't do it," cried Adair, in a terrified voice. "For the love of goodness, don't do it, or you are a dead man!"

This only had the effect of increasing the detective's desire to clear up the mystery, as well as to demonstrate that there was no place where he was afraid to go.

So, without another word, he strode across the court in the direction of the apparition.

He had not gone very far, however, when Adair, running after him, clutched him by the coat-tails, swung on like grim death, and swore that he would not allow the detective to sacrifice himself in so foolish a fashion.

This aroused Thad's ire somewhat, and he broke loose from the terrified actor and growled:

"Let me go, you idiot! What is the matter with you?"

"I insist that you do not go," still pleaded the other. "I'm sure you will never return alive, if you do."

"I'll risk that," retorted Thad, hotly.

"If you must find out what it is, why not fire a shot at it from here?"

For the sake of satisfying the fellow, Thad raised his pistol and aimed it just above the object, so that if it should turn out to be a human being no harm would be done.

But, he had scarcely done so when there was a flash, a sharp crack, and a ball whistled close to the detective's head.

Spurred on by this unexpected occurrence, Thad returned the fire, still aiming high, and received another in return, and he dropped to the ground.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

The bullet which had caused the detective to fall had really done no great damage.

It had grazed his temple, stunning him somewhat, but he had no more than fallen than he was again upon his feet, and, furious with rage, made a lunge of several paces forward, at the same time firing in the direction of the unknown person.

A groan of pain arose from the shadow; then the figure was seen to suddenly rise and steal along the fence.

"Halt!" cried Thad.

But the figure continued to glide along the fence.

Increasing his pace, the detective rushed upon it, and in another moment put out his hand and grasped the night prowler.

At this close quarters, his eyes having grown accustomed to the darkness, he could discern that it was a man—and a powerful one at that—with a fierce, brutal face, adorned with a heavy black mustache.

The moment he clutched the ruffian—for there was no doubt as to the man's character—the fellow turned and clinched with the detective.

Thad realized at once that he had got hold of a giant fully equal to himself, and his only hope was that the ruffian's wound would soon begin to tell upon his strength.

In grasping the fellow Thad had merely got hold of his collar and the back part of it at that.

Meanwhile his antagonist had taken a firm grasp of the detective's collar, and in such a manner that he was able to force his knuckles with painful force against his throat.

The other soon discovered his advantage and exerted himself with greater effort than ever.

Then he was favored with a bright idea.

He had been an excellent wrestler in his day and had not forgotten all the locks and trips.

Just as his antagonist was exerting him-

self the hardest to choke Thad to the ground the latter threw out his foot with the force of a catapult, striking the man just below the shin and then bringing it back with nearly equal force and suddenness, caught him behind the knee joint completely tripping him, and the rough dropped to his knees.

In doing so his hold upon Thad's collar was broken.

Following up his advantage, the detective, who still held his revolver in his left hand, clutched the fellow by the throat with his right and at the same time brought the butt of his pistol down with terrific force upon his head.

Meanwhile the bruiser was exerting himself with all the power he possessed to throw the detective off his feet.

He had grasped Thad around the knees and was striving to bring him down; but the great Special, in each instance, braced himself against his antagonist, thus preventing himself from falling, and still continued to hammer him over the head with his revolver.

But, at length, Thad brought his weapon down, by accident, in close proximity to the man's temple, when, with a howl of pain and rage, he dropped like a beef.

And before he had time to recover, the detective had snapped the handcuffs on his wrists.

Now, for the first time, he looked about to see what had become of Adair, when the sound of footsteps coming through the narrow passage struck his ear.

A moment later the figures of two men could be discerned in the dim shadow.

"Here they are!" he heard one of them say.

And he recognized the voice as that of Adair.

The two men approached the detective, and as soon as they were near enough he recognized that the other man was a policeman.

By this time Thad's antagonist had recovered sufficiently from his stupor to feel his pain, and was groaning and cursing most lustily.

"What's goin' on here?" demanded the officer.

"Oh, a little scrap, that's all," replied the detective.

"This fellow shot at us as we came out of the house," interposed Adair.

"Which fellow?" asked the cop, eying Thad with evident disfavor.

"The chap over there on the ground."

"And what did this one do?"

"I knocked the ruffian down and handcuffed him," responded the detective bluntly.

"What right have you to knock people down and handcuff them?" demanded the policeman savagely.

"This is my authority!" answered Thad coolly, throwing back his lapel and exposing his badge.

"Oh, as for that, every huckster in town has a badge. Who are you, anyway?"

"Ask your chief if he knows Detective Burr!"

"The chief may know you, but I don't and ye'll have to come along to the station with me."

"With pleasure; but, in the mean time, what are we going to do with this wounded man, and the dead one up-stairs?"

"Is any one dead up there?" gasped the policeman nervously.

"Yes."

"Then, I reckon you know purty well how he came to his death."

"I do for a fact. But, come on; we are losing time. If you are going to take me to the station, do it at once, so that I can get back after my game."

"Wal, if ye're a detective ye won't mind helping me with this chap and if ye kin prove yerself all right when ye git to the station, I'll let ye go."

'I ought not to do it; it is your place to call a patrol or an ambulance; but, under the circumstances, I'll help you to the street with the fellow and then accompany you to the station, as I am desirous of learning who he is."

The two men then took each an arm of the wounded ruffian and lifted him upon his feet, and then by almost carrying him, managed to finally get him to the street.

Here the policeman blew his whistle, and was soon joined by another officer.

"Send in a patrol call, Mike," called the first policeman.

The second policeman swaggered away to the nearest patrol box and sent in a call.

In about fifteen minutes the "hurry up" came lumbering up, and the wounded man, together with Thad and the policeman whom he had first encountered took passage.

As soon as they arrived at the station and Thad walked up in front of the bar the sergeant who, as luck would have it, proved to be an old New York policeman who had known Thad for years, recognized him.

"Well, upon my soul if it isn't Thad Burr!" he exclaimed, reaching down over the bar to shake his hand. "What in the name of common sense brings you here, old man?"

"This," replied the detective, jerking his thumb in the direction of the policeman. "He is responsible for it."

"What does this mean, Mulligan?" demanded the sergeant, turning to the officer.

"I found him under very suspicious circumstances," answered the officer.

"How was it, Thad?"

Thad explained in detail his work upon the great conspiracy case, and how it had led him on the present evening to go to the disreputable place where he was attacked by this Russian, of his flight with the latter, which resulted in his defeat and handcuffing, and finally of the policeman, whom Adair had brought to arrest the would-be murderer, arresting him, the detective.

"Now, sir, what have you got to say?" the sergeant demanded, addressing the policeman again. "Is this the truth?"

"Partly; sir," grunted the officer.

"In what respect is it untrue?"

"Wal, yer see, the first part of the story is all news to me."

"But the last part—the part that concerns yourself, is true, is it?"

"I believe it is, sir."

"In that case, what excuse have you to offer for such a blunder?"

"I thought it was a common row, sir."

"And this after you had been called to the spot by this gentleman's friend and this gentleman had explained to you that he was the renowned Thaddeus Burr? Perhaps you never happened to have heard of the great detective?"

"No, sir, I admit I never did."

"You are a brilliant member of the force. Now, try and exercise a little more judgment next time."

Then turning to the prisoner, who had grown very weak and pale by this time, he asked.

"What is your name, sir?"

"Monte Munson," was the cool rejoinder.

Thad was forced to smile, as was also Adair, but they were both satisfied by the fact of his giving his name that he was in some way connected with the conspirator.

"Where do you live?"

"Everywhere," came the answer.

"In that case we shall give you a home for a while."

"In my opinion, sergeant," interposed the detective, "he had better be sent to the hospital."

An ambulance was called and the fellow was soon thereafter sent away to the emergency hospital.

The following morning Thad called at the hospital, and as soon as the wounded man saw him he expressed a desire to make a confession.

CHAPTER XXVII. THE CONFESSION.

THAD BURR had not been in the wounded man's presence five minutes before he made two discoveries.

One was that the man had not very many hours to live, and the other, that he was an entirely different character from what he had taken him to be the previous evening.

It was evident that, although his features were bloated and distorted by dissipation, he was a person of intelligence, and had once belonged to a good class of society, for his language, as soon as he began to speak, indicated as much.

After looking at the detective for some time, as if trying to make up his mind

whether he was likely to receive any sympathy in that direction or not, the dying man began:

"I have come to the conclusion that you are a man of strong sympathies, sir—one who can feel for another's woes and weaknesses. If I am not the poorest judge in the world, your face indicates it."

"You were never nearer the truth in your life, my poor man," answered the detective, moved by the remark.

"That is what I thought, and that, above everything else, prompted me to make this confession."

"Go on!" requested Thad.

"I noticed last night, when I gave the sergeant the name 'Monte Munson,' that you and your companion laughed, believing I had assumed the name for the occasion; and you also believed that the name was suggested to me through my association with a certain party whom you have been endeavoring to trace for some time."

"You are right about that."

"Well, as a matter of fact, the name is mine. I confess that I have not used it for some time, however."

"One moment," interrupted the detective: "what was Livingstone's motive for assuming your name?"

"For the reason that the name at one time had an awing influence among the criminal class with whom I associated, so that I was the acknowledged leader. When D'Arville, or Livingstone, as you call him, commenced operations in this and New York City, he employed me to do his dirty work, and for the sake of the influence he knew the name wielded among the class which he desired to serve him, he assumed the name of Monte Munson. It made no difference to me, as I had long since ceased to use it. And that brings me to the part of my confession, and the only part, which can have any interest for you—my connection with Count D'Arville, in the great conspiracy case. The profession all over the country, as well as the police, give him credit for having conceived this, the cleverest confidence plot ever conceived by man; but he had no more to do with originating it than you had, sir."

"You don't tell my?"

"It is a fact. D'Arville, however, is brave, cunning, and possesses the dash necessary to carry out a gigantic scheme of this kind, all of which I lack. He also had money, or what was the same thing, the faculty of getting it, another essential in a matter of this kind."

"You have followed this case close enough, I imagine, so it is not necessary for me to go into details, except as to the outcome. In all my career and vast connection with the criminal classes, I was never beaten till I met this man."

"Did he beat you out of your share of the spoils, too?" Thad questioned.

"He did."

"What was your share to be?"

"One-half."

"But you were not the only one whom he swindled."

"No, I know there were several others—the young men, for instance, they were to each have a third, and got nothing."

"Except Beach."

"Yes—except Beach."

"What do you know about this affair?"

"Was he or was he not murdered by D'Arville's wife?"

"Yes—by her. Listen, and I'll tell you all about it."

"Do."

"To begin with, let me tell you that this woman is not his wife, but mine! However, when he began to operate here about six years ago he cut such a swell that he managed to captivate Lucretia, and she left me for him, fool that she was! She might have known that she was forty, then. Well, as might have been expected, he did cast her off, after about a year and treated her brutally. But, that did not seem to cool her ardor. I never saw a woman worship a man as she does him. Badly as he has treated her and her child, and still spurns them from him as though they were a contagion, either one of them would lay down her life for him any minute."

"Two days ago she returned from New York on an expedition of searching for him, as she had been doing these five years,

although she knew that if she should succeed in finding him, she would receive nothing but abuse and rebuff for her trouble. In the course of her rounds she chanced to run across Beach, whom it seems she knew some years ago, and inquired of him regarding D'Arville, or Livingstone, as she called him. Beach, simple minded as he was, told her all he knew, including the account of the conspiracy, of D'Arville beating him out of his share of the spoils, and finally, that he, Beach, was in possession of a clue which he proposed to give to a certain detective, who would not be long in putting the old man away."

"She pretended, as she always did to outsiders, that she would be glad to have her husband, as she called him, put away, and affected to encourage the young man. In the mean time she learned through him the whereabouts of D'Arville, and went direct to him and notified him of his peril. As a consequence, the wily duck moved. But she was not done with Beach. She was determined to kill him, though she did not relish the work herself, and what do you think of her gall in coming to me and asking me to do it for her?"

"Rather cheeky, I should say," smiled the detective. "But, did you do it?"

"I should say not."

"How came you on the premises at the time?"

"I'll tell you. When I refused to do the dirty job for her, she went back to D'Arville and by a good deal of palaver, succeeded in making him believe that his life wasn't worth a pea so long as Beach lived. When she had got him worked up to this pitch, she tried to get him to put the young man out of the way himself; but this he would not consent to do. It was altogether out of his line. He didn't mind the crime. That didn't worry him in the least, but the work was dirty."

"However, he finally promised to assist her, but she must do the actual work. He would meet her in the little court where you found me, but she must fire the shot. So it was a reel. Yet true to his character, he did not fulfil his part of the agreement. She came but he did not. I was there, but I did not accompany her, nor was she aware that I was present. Thinking that he might, for once in his life, keep his word, I slipped into the inclosure, and concealed myself in shadow of the fence."

"At length I saw her come, stand for some time, waiting for his arrival, and finally enter the house. I understood what that meant. She had determined to do the work alone. Still I thought—hoped—he might come, and watched with an eagerness I had never experienced before—an eagerness that amounted to delight!"

"Why did you wish him to come?" interposed Thad.

"Why?" he muttered. "Because I wished to kill him!"

"That was what brought you there, was it?"

"Yes," hissed the other, "it was!"

"You mistook me for him then?"

"I did."

The wounded man closed his eyes wearily for some time, and when he again opened them, it could be plainly seen that he was sinking rapidly.

"Well," he resumed in a much weaker voice, "there is little more to tell. Having failed in my attempt to kill this scoundrel, there is but one thing left for me."

"And that is?"

"That he is captured and punished as he deserves. I alone can put you onto a clue by which this can be accomplished. You might hunt for him from now till doomsday, but without this clue you would never be able to find him."

Thad did not believe this, for the reason that he had already been upon the consummate villain's track half a dozen times, and it could only be a matter of time when he must encounter him.

But he said nothing about this, and merely asked

"What is your clue?"

"There are two essential points to know before there is any chance whatever," returned the other, "and these are, first, his place of residence, and second the sort of guise in which to meet him."

"Where does he live?"

"At — Girard avenue."

"I have been told that by half a dozen parties," he said, "but, although he once stopped there, he does so no longer."

"How do you know?"

"Because I have been there; and, what is more, I have rented the rooms formerly occupied by him."

"That is because you did not go in the proper guise, as I told you. He still lives there—owns the property, and the woman known as Mrs. Jerome, is his own wife!"

"And the girl?"

"Her daughter by a former husband," answered the invalid. "Now, there is just one man who can, on all occasions, see the count, and that is Dr. Swinson. He lives at — Market street. Go and see him, study his appearance, his manner of speaking and all his peculiarities, and if you are the adept in impersonation is equal to your reputation in that line, you can succeed in palming yourself off on the people of the house, at least, and thereby being admitted to D'Arville's presence, and I guess that is all you want."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BY A HAIR.

It should have been mentioned that before leaving the room where the murdered man was found, Thad had carefully removed the half-dozen or so long black hairs from the dead man's hand, rolled them up into a small package and placed them in his pocketbook for future reference.

But he had no idea at that time how soon he should have an opportunity of using them.

After hearing the dying rascal's confession, the evidence gained therefrom added to what he had himself seen, convinced him that the woman known as Lucretia Livingstone was the murderer of Albert Beach.

As may be imagined, as soon as the discovery of the dead body had been reported to the police department they had used every effort to find some clue to the perpetrator of the crime; and as also may be imagined, little or no progress in the right direction had been made.

The fact that Munson, the man whom Thad had wounded, had been discovered lurking about the premises was sufficient to convince the police authorities that he was the murderer, and it was not likely that they would go much further than attempt to extort a confession of the crime out of him.

This, the detective knew, was out of the question, as the fellow was undoubtedly innocent of the crime.

Therefore, as soon as he was through with the dying man Thad went directly to a police magistrate and procured a warrant for the woman's arrest.

Having arranged this matter, he returned to his lodgings in Girard avenue.

On meeting the little miss he asked her if Mr. Livingstone had called since, to which she informed him that he had not.

Thad was in a sad quandary.

He could not imagine, after all, that the conspirator still had lodgings under the same roof with himself, in spite of what the dying criminal had told him.

Nevertheless, on going to his rooms, he dressed himself in a neat suit of clothes, but retained the same make-up he had had before—that of the character of Lumsden—and hurried away to call upon Dr. Swinson.

He was lucky enough to catch the doctor at home, and made an excuse for calling by pretending that he was afflicted with some complication, the symptoms of which he described in detail.

No allusion was made to Livingstone or the case with which he had been identified, and after half an hour's conversation with the genial old doctor, it was difficult for the detective to conceive how such a man could be the confidant of such a man as the conspirator.

Meanwhile he had made a careful study of the doctor, so that he believed he should have no difficulty in impersonating him, at least well enough to impose upon the family where the rascal was stopping.

By the time he had finished with the doctor and got dinner, it was close upon eight o'clock in the evening.

He, therefore, hastened back to his lodgings, and took particular precaution that nobody saw him enter.

Once in his room, he took an inventory of his stock of disguises, and was gratified to find that he had everything necessary for a complete make-up as the doctor—gray wig, slightly bald, gray beard, trimmed to a point, bushy gray eyebrows and spectacles.

So he set to work, and in the course of half an hour it is questionable whether the doctor's best friends would not have mistaken the person who now stood before the mirror for him.

Thad had noticed a cloak hanging in the doctor's office, which he had no doubt the doctor put on going out in bad weather, and as he had provided himself with a similar article, he threw this about him.

He then opened the door, put his head out and listened to assure himself that no one was stirring about the halls.

Satisfying himself on this point, he stole noiselessly forth, and was fortunate enough to reach the street door without being seen.

After pausing on the stoop for a few minutes, he rung the bell.

The door was soon opened by a servant.

Then it was that Thad realized that he had made one unfortunate omission in his preparations.

The family had used the name of Livingstone in speaking of the conspirator, but the dying man had called him D Arville.

Now the question in his mind was, by what name had the doctor known him, and what were the family used to hearing him call him?

After a brief hesitancy, he decided on D'Arville, and asked if that gentleman was in, at the same time handing the servant one of the doctor's cards.

The servant, who unquestionably mistook him for the doctor, bowed, smiled and said:

"No, doctor, the count is not here this evening. I thought he would be at your house. He was here this afternoon and when he left he said he was going to see you, sir."

"Ah, that is unfortunate," returned the detective, assuming the peculiar tone of voice of the doctor. "I am afraid I shall miss him. Did the count say whether he would be back this evening or not?"

"Don't believe he will, sir. His business keeps him away a good deal, and he may not be back before to-morrow. Shall I say that you called?"

"No, you had better not. It will only worry him, and the probabilities are that I may call again to-morrow."

"Very well, doctor."

Thad congratulated himself upon his success thus far, but he was in something of a quandary what to do or where to go next.

After a little thought he remembered the address which Adair had spoken of as the one at which Livingstone had been stopping when they shadowed him.

Might he not still be there after all? Or, if not, might the people of the house not know what his own address was?

The thought had no more than suggested itself to him than he resolved to act upon it.

Pulling the cape up about his ears, the detective plunged out into the wet and darkness, but had gone but a little way when the sound of wheels attracted him, and looking in the direction, he saw that it was a closed carriage.

As soon as the vehicle was opposite to him he hailed the driver, and was gratified to learn that the carriage was empty.

Having given the necessary direction, he entered, and the vehicle rolled away.

In the course of nearly half an hour the carriage stopped.

The detective alighted and, seeing the number he wanted directly in front of him, walked up the stoop and rung the bell.

The house had the appearance of a respectable residence, and when the servant came to the door his appearance corroborated the first impression.

"Does Count D'Arville live here?" asked the detective.

"No, sir," was the prompt reply.

Indeed, so prompt was the reply, that Thad was pretty well satisfied that the conspirator had used some other name at this place.

He determined to satisfy himself on this

point, however, before going any further, so asked:

"He was stopping here a short time ago, was he not?"

"Not since I have been here, about three years," answered the attendant.

"Ah, then I got the wrong number. There is another friend of mine living in this neighborhood somewhere. Does Mr. Livingstone stop here, or has he ever stopped here?"

"Yes, sir, he stops here; but he's not at home to-night."

"Have you any idea where he has gone?"

"I have not, sir."

Disappointed and almost discouraged, the detective turned away and ignoring the carriage, walked off down the street.

He had not gone far when he met and passed a woman, wrapped to the eyes in a great waterproof.

His mind was so absorbed in thought that he did not pay any attention to her at first, but after she had passed his mind curiously reverted to that dingy waterproof.

Where had he seen it? And why should it have attracted his attention at this time?

A moment's reflection cleared up the mystery.

It was the same waterproof which the woman had worn who came to his house on that memorable night.

Therefore the wearer was none other than Lucretia Livingstone, or Munson!

A thrill shot through him almost equal to that which would have agitated him if he had seen the conspirator himself.

Instantly turning upon his heel, he started to follow the woman and ascertain where she was going.

It was not necessary to follow her more than half a block, for at the end of that distance she turned out of the sidewalk, ascended a stoop and rung a bell.

It needed but a glance to show him that it was the same house at which he himself had called a few minutes before.

"Let us see whether she has any better luck than I had," Thad muttered to himself.

But it appeared that she had not, for after a brief conference with the person who opened the door, the door was closed and the woman again descended the stoop.

As she reached the sidewalk he stepped quickly to her side and producing his warrant, said:

"Lucretia Munson, or Livingstone, in the name of the State, I arrest you!"

The woman turned and eyed him with a cold, stony stare, and without the slightest tremor.

"Arrest me?" she said in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Those were my words," said Thad firmly. "I see no reason why I should repeat them."

"Upon what charge, pray?" she asked coldly.

"The murder of Albert Beach!"

A sarcastic smile overspread her features.

"You have certainly made a mistake," she sneered. "They have already found his murderer."

"Have they?"

"Yes—Monte Munson."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, sir."

Thad drew out his pocketbook and took therefrom the coil of long black hair.

This he straightened out and held in front of the woman's face.

"Has any body noticed that Monte Munson ever wore such hair as that?" he asked.

At sight of the hair the woman turned ghastly.

She glared at it in speechless amazement and horror, and her teeth began to chatter.

"You found it in his hand?" she gasped.

"Yes, in the murdered man's hand!"

Lucretia Livingstone swooned.

CHAPTER XXIX.

NEARING THE GAME.

BURR caught the woman in his arms and, as there chanced to be a policeman passing at that moment, he came to the detective's assistance.

Thad did not consider it worth while to explain matters, and the two men proceeded to use their best efforts to restore

the woman to consciousness, which they were soon able to do with the assistance of a flask of brandy which Thad carried in his pocket.

When she was able to stand upon her feet a carriage was called and she and the detective entered.

They proceeded in silence for some moments, but at length she broke it with:

"I suppose the evidence is pretty strong against me, is it not?"

"Very," was the cool response.

"Well, I do not care," she sighed, after a pause. "I suppose I may as well confess?"

"Just as well. It will not go any harder with you."

"I presume not. Well," she went on with another deep sigh, "it is just as well so. I have nothing to live for, anyway. The only man that I care anything for spurns me, and he will soon be in the toils, I suppose, anyway."

"You refer to Count D'Arville?"

"Yes."

"You were very much attached to him, in spite of his cruelty, I believe?"

"No one could be more so."

"And yet he was not your lawful husband?"

"Who says so?" she snapped with sudden rage. "Who dares to say so?"

"The man calling himself Monte Munson. He told me on his death-bed. Indeed, it was with almost his last breath."

"Quite fitting, I should say! The man never told a truth in his life; it would be inconsistent that his last words should be anything but falsehood. What did he say?"

"He said that you had deserted him for the count."

"An infamous lie! That is, the most of it. I was once his wife—when he was a respectable man; but he abused me so after he gave way to dissipation and afterward became a criminal, that I procured a divorce from him. It was while he was serving time in the Penitentiary."

"So you were legally married to the count?"

"Yes."

"How about the woman known as Mrs. Jerome, who claims to be his wife?"

"I was not aware that she ever claimed anything of the kind, and I do not believe it. Was this another one of Munson's stories?"

"It was."

"Well, you will find that, like the rest of his stories, it is a lie."

After a short pause Thad said:

"Now, I have a surprise for you. You do not recognize me as the detective whom you called upon in New York a few nights ago, do you?"

She stared at him in the dim light, but could evidently trace no resemblance in the face before her to the one she had seen in Thirty-fourth street, New York.

"No," she finally answered. "It is not possible."

"But it is possible, for I am the same man whom you induced to entice your daughter away for the alleged purpose of insnaring your husband."

She continued to stare, but made no comment.

"What was your motive for doing what you did that night?" he continued.

"The motive which I stated at that time—to insnare and capture my husband."

"You still adhere to this assertion, do you?"

"Why should I not? It is the truth."

"According to Munson's story, it is not. However, as I have found him in one lie, it is possible that this is another one. But, why did you slip away while I was up-stairs in the flat where your daughter was stopping?"

"I thought you understood that I was only to show you the place and then go away. It would not have done for my daughter to have seen me."

"But she also slipped away—after remaining in the house over night."

"I know nothing about that. Indeed, I am not responsible for her actions."

"You do not know what has become of her, then?"

"I do not."

"She came to Philadelphia the day succeeding the one on which I saw you."

"I have heard as much, although I do not know where she has gone to."

"Is it not possible that she is with her father?"

"It may be."

"You do not know where he is, I presume?"

"No, sir, I do not. I wish I did."

"You were looking for him when you went to the house where I found you, were you not?"

"Yes."

"Do you know that he had been there within a very short time?"

"I have heard so."

"Beach told you, didn't he?"

"Yes, and others."

"By the way, while I think of it, this daughter of yours is not the daughter of the count, is she?"

"She is—but not mine. She is only my step-daughter."

"Ah, I thought it could not be possible that she was your daughter, and his likewise. And now let me ask you, why did you kill Beach?"

She looked up at him quickly, hesitated, and then asked:

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because I wish to know."

"But you must have some more potent reason."

"Well, if you must know," he said, after a little thought, "Munson, in his confession, asserted that your reason for killing Beach was because you had discovered that he possessed certain clues, by means of which he was likely to discover the whereabouts of and bring about the arrest of your husband. Is that true?"

After a long pause, the woman answered:

"That was it. At least, the principal reason. I had a grudge against him, but it was not strong enough to have caused me to have killed him."

"But how does this agree with your statement awhile ago that you desired to have him arrested?"

"Oh, a person is liable to change his mind," she answered, promptly, "especially in the case of one we love. It was my desire at the time to meet you in New York, that he should be arrested and punished for his crime, and it is still my desire; but when, the other night, I learned that this fellow Beach was likely to be the instrument to that end, it fired me with resentment, and I determined that he should never accomplish his purpose; especially as he had assisted my husband in his plot to the extent of furnishing the necessary information about his cousin's affairs."

"But you must not forget that your husband promised him one-third of the profits of the transaction, and then did what the meanest thug would blush to do—lied and betrayed his trust."

"I understand he did all that, and now that I think of it, I do not blame Beach so much."

"And are probably sorry for what you have done?"

"Yes, I am sorry."

By this time they had arrived at the police station, and Thad produced his warrant charging the woman with the murder of Albert Beach.

As it happened the case had been brought more prominently before the officers of this particular precinct than any other, and when Thad brought in his prisoner it produced a sensation.

The sergeant could not believe that the detective had not made a mistake; and when the latter informed him that the prisoner had already made a confession, he was more astonished than ever.

After disposing of his charge Thad concluded to return to his lodgings, thinking that it was late enough now to enable him to get in without observation.

It was nearly midnight when he arrived at the house, and it was very quiet in this aristocratic locality.

He was therefore surprised to see a figure standing near the stoop as he ascended.

It was partially concealed in the shadow, but on looking intently at it for a few seconds he was enabled to discern that it was a woman.

After what had happened the previous evening at the hands of a woman the detective experienced a slight feeling of concern: but he quickly dismissed the weakness and was about to put his key in the door, when there was a quick movement on the part of the woman, and on looking round, he saw that she had emerged from the shadow and was about to ascend the steps.

She hesitated when she saw the detective looking at her, and then spoke:

"Please, sir, may I speak to you a moment?"

She was muffled in such a way as to prevent him from seeing her face, and the voice was unfamiliar to him, so he hesitated before granting the request.

At length he asked, without moving from where he stood:

"What do you wish to speak to me about?"

"Come a little nearer," she said in little more than a whisper. "I do not wish anyone to hear me."

Visions of subtle women with stilettos concealed beneath their cloaks floated before him, and again he hesitated.

It was a rare thing for him to experience anything approaching fear, at the same time he could not forget that discretion was the better part of valor.

"Speak out," he said at last. "No one will hear you here. See, the house is in the darkness and every one is in bed long before this."

The woman hesitated and seemed uncertain how to proceed, but at length took a step or two up the stoop and still speaking in the half-whisper, said:

"You do not know me, but I know you. You are detective Burr, and I am Hortense Livingstone, the girl whom you persuaded to leave the flat in Avenue A, New York, by telling me that my father was ill."

Even now he could not see her face, but he recognized the voice distinctly enough, and the cold defiance of her tone almost gave him a shudder.

Still he determined that she should not know that he experienced any trepidation, and asked in a cold, practical tone:

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to tell you where my father is," she answered.

Thad was sure that there was treachery behind all this now, and asked in a sarcastic voice:

"What do you want to tell me that for?"

"Because I want to arrest him."

"That is very strange. I should think a daughter would want to shield her father, rather than betray him."

"In the case of most fathers, so you might; but it is different with mine. A father who will spurn you from him and allow you to walk the streets penniless and hungry and without shelter, is hardly the one to expect the love and sympathy of his daughter."

There was a pathos in her voice as she uttered these words that touched the detective deeply, and well-nigh dispelled the suspicion he had entertained a moment before.

Still, knowing the treachery of the family, so far as he had seen them, he was at a loss what to do or say.

But his mind was soon made up.

Taking a roll of money from his pocket, he picked off a good size bill and, holding it out to her, he said:

"You need not go without something to eat or a place to sleep as long as I have a cent. Take this and go about your business."

"No!" she muttered, spurning the offer. "I have asked you for nothing and will accept nothing at your hands. All I ask of you is that you will go with me and arrest my father, so that I may have my rights. If you do not wish to do that, you may do as you have bidden me—go about your business."

CHAPTER XXX.

A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK.

The girl's last words caused a revulsion of feelings on the detective's part.

He admired her independence, and could not help thinking that there might be some foundation for what she had said.

He knew in reason, from the fact that the conspirator had kept her in the wretched den he had in New York, that he was not doing justice by her, and he felt that it was his duty, outside of any opportunity it

might afford him for capturing the arch scoundrel, to do what he could to gain for her whatever rights she was being deprived of by this unnatural father, who was amply able to provide for her in luxury.

Then came another thought.

If what she said was true, why had she not applied to the proper authorities?

And scarcely had this thought come into his head, when another question presented itself.

How had she managed to penetrate his disguise?

This led him to suspect once more that there was some wicked conspiracy behind it all.

Then he asked:

"Why did you not take this information to the police?"

"I had several reasons for not doing so. In the first place, the police could never find him if I told them, and it would be impossible for me to take a man in uniform into the place. But the principal reason is that I wished you to have the credit and reward for making the capture, because you were kind to me the other night, and I believe you to be a good man."

"But you deserted me then, how am I to know that you do not intend to trick me now?"

"That was before he had mistreated me and my mother so shamefully," she explained.

Thad reflected a few moments, and then all of a sudden his mind underwent a radical change.

He would risk it, anyway.

He had gone through many worse episodes than this promised to be, and he did not doubt that he should come out of this one unscathed.

"Well," he said at last, descending the stoop, "I will go with you. If what you say is true, and you do not attempt to inveigle me into any traps, you shall be well rewarded besides making a life-long friend of me; but if you try to betray me, woe unto you!"

The girl made no reply to this, and started along by his side as he walked away.

"How far is it?" he suddenly asked, stopping short.

"Oh, it is a long way," she answered.

"Clear at the other end of the city."

"Down-town?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then we had better get a carriage or wait for a car."

At that moment he noticed a carriage coming in from a side street, and hailed it.

Thad was filled with conflicting emotions, such as had never disturbed him before.

He could not but feel that he was acting rashly in accompanying this wily girl, as he believed her to be, and yet his pride and sympathy combined to prevent him from refusing to go.

He did not greatly fear any injury from the girl herself, at the same time, he had taken the precaution to place her in such a position from him that it would be impossible for her to use a knife, if she should possess the subtlety and fiendishness of her father and step-mother.

When they were well under way he asked:

"How did you manage to discover who I was in this disguise, Miss Livingstone?"

To his surprise she burst out laughing.

"You will be surprised when I tell you," she replied. "You did not know it, but I was not twenty yards away when you arrested mamma to-night."

"That is surprising; but nothing was said at that time which was calculated to betray my identity. Indeed, your mother did not recognize me and had no idea who I was until I told her."

"That is all true enough. Neither did I know who you were at that time; but when you got into the carriage to drive to the station, I was bound to go there too, and, not having any money to hire a carriage, jumped up behind."

"And rode to the station in that way?"

"Yes, sir."

"But, you did not come into the station, did you?"

"Yes. If you remember, there was quite a crowd of ragamuffins who pushed into the station to see the woman arraigned, and I mingled with them."

"I muffled my head up in my cloak so that neither you nor mamma would recognize me, and heard everything that passed, and I heard the sergeant-call you by name. I was surprised, for I saw no resemblance in you to the man whom I had seen in New York, but then I guessed that you were disguised. Mamma had told me where you were stopping, so I did not wait for the end of the proceedings, but as soon as they started to take mamma to a cell I hurried out and, just having one nickel left, spent it to go to your house."

"You knew that I had not returned yet, was the reason you waited outside, was it?"

"Oh, I wouldn't have dared to have gone in any way."

"Have you no compunction or regret in having your father arrested?" the detective broke off.

"Not after the way he has treated me."

"How has he treated you?"

"Well, you know the sort of place he kept me in in New York?"

"Yes."

"When I succeeded in getting away from there through your good offices, I came to Philadelphia, hunted him up and implored him to let me live with him, or at least to give me a respectable place in which to live. But he refused and ordered me out of the house, and that without a cent in my pocket, as I said."

Thad noticed a slight discrepancy here, but he thought it might have been a slightly metaphorical error on her part. People are often prone to say they haven't a cent, when, as a matter of fact, they have a few dollars. So he said nothing.

After a long silence, he resumed:

"You say you have no money and no place to go, and yet you refused to take my money awhile ago. What do you expect to do after your father is arrested? You will have no better chance then than now."

"He has a fortune belonging to me in my own right," she explained.

"While that may all be true, you cannot hope to get it for a long time to come, and you may starve in the mean-time."

This seemed to surprise her.

"Oh, I thought as soon as he was locked up they would take his money away from him and give it to me."

"By no means. Whatever money he has on his person will be put away for safe-keeping until the conclusion of his sentence—in the event of his conviction—when it will be returned to him."

"Oh, dear, then I do not know what I shall do," she cried in dismay.

"Never mind," he said, reassuringly. "If you do the square thing, I shall see that you are well provided for. You will be entitled to a portion of the reward money, any way, so that you will have plenty and be under obligations to no one."

At this juncture the carriage stopped, and the girl, putting her head quickly out of the window, cried in a subdued voice:

"Oh, we're there!"

Thad also looked out before alighting, and saw that they were in front of a magnificent mansion, and so engrossed had he been kept in conversation with the girl, that he hadn't the remotest idea what part of the city they were in.

The houses did not look like those in the lower part, and yet he had imagined that they were going down town all the way.

Nevertheless, he hesitated no longer, but got out and assisted the girl to alight.

As soon as he had helped her to the ground he was rather surprised to see her trip gayly away toward the house, which was some distance from the street, and the yard surrounded by a fence.

He followed at a respectful distance, but before he was near the residence she had already rung the bell.

"Is it not rather late for me to come here with you to-night?" he asked, as he came up with her. "See, it is long after midnight, and everybody will be in bed."

"Oh, no," she replied gayly. "These folks don't go to bed before two or three in the morning."

"Do you live in the house?" he questioned, nervously.

"No, but papa does, which is all the same."

"But you say your papa—"

But at that moment the door was opened by a liveried footman, and Thad's sentence was never finished.

The girl whispered something to the footman, at which he smiled and held the door open for her to enter.

Thad followed reluctantly, and as soon as he got inside he recognized that the place was a club-house of the very first order!

The girl tripped ahead and led the way into the strangers' reception-room.

When he was seated she called one of the pages and told him to tell Count D'Arville that Dr. Swinson wished to see him.

This unexpected turn of affairs took the detective fairly off his feet.

The subtlety of the ruse was astounding!

But, how had she conceived the idea? And, moreover, how had she come to discover the ruse which he had intended playing upon her father in this guise?

He would have liked to have asked her all this, and a thousand other questions, but it was not possible, then.

While he was still puzzling over it, the count entered, smiling, and extended his hand to what he imagined to be his old friend, the doctor; but, as he did so, and Thad was on the point of grasping the proffered hand, the count chanced to glance around and his eyes fell upon his daughter.

Instantly a remarkable change came over him.

He drew back, regarded the girl with a scowl, and, putting up his eye-glasses, scrutinized the detective for a full minute.

Then, suddenly, he broke forth in a storm of rage:

"I thought as much! It's a conspiracy! You are not my friend at all, but an impostor! Here, usher, put this fellow into the street. He's an impostor, disguised as a friend of mine for the purpose of enjoying the hospitality of the club. Throw him out, I say, curse him!"

With that, a burly fellow in the club's livery strode up to the detective, who by this time had risen to his feet, and was about to take him by the arm for the purpose of leading him out.

"Stand back!" cried Thad. "Put a hand on me, you flunky, and I'll brain you!"

That was enough for the flunky.

He sprung back, pale and trembling.

"Do your duty, I tell you!" roared the count. "Throw him out!"

"Dare to touch me, and you are a dead man!" repeated Thad.

"Then, I shall call the head waiter," thundered the irate count.

With that he started to leave the room.

"Not so fast, my fine fellow," demurred the alert Special, springing forward and grasping his man by the arm, in his powerful grip. "I have a warrant for you, sir!"

"Let me go, fellow!" shouted the count. "Here, gentlemen, this ruffian is assaulting me in my own club! Help! help!"

By this time a score or more of the members of the club rushed into the room.

"What does all this mean?" demanded the head-waiter, pushing to the front at that moment.

"This ruffian has got in here somehow, and has assaulted me," explained the count.

With one accord the whole pack dashed upon the detective.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FIGHT AND VICTORY.

An ordinary man would have been completely panic-stricken by the tumultuous onslaught, for no less than fifty furious, howling club men had rushed upon him, and, as he was aware, most of them were amateur athletes.

But, he had been through too many such scenes, and with a far tougher crowd to contend with, to lose his presence of mind.

Springing back so as to keep out of their reach, he finally landed with his back against a wall.

The crowd was right upon him, and there was no time for anything but fight.

At least a dozen were striking out with all their force, and it was only a matter of time when some of them must get in their deadly

work unless prevented—which the beleaguered man decided to do.

Swinging his heavy fist out with the force and velocity of a battering-ram, an athletic dude went down, as though he had been shot.

Following up with his left, another dropped quicker than a flash, and from that he began to pile them up so fast that it looked in the space of three or four seconds as if a cyclone had swooped down among them.

By the end of a minute no less than a dozen had been sent to the floor; then the ardor of the rest began to cool.

Some of them even considered whether it would not be better to call a halt and investigate matters, while others were in favor of calling in a squad of policemen to suppress this unexpected human tornado.

Finally the latter course was resorted to, and a platoon of blue-coats marched into the room.

The sergeant in command, after everything had quieted down, approached Thad and asked him what he meant by his conduct.

Thad thanked his stars that he was not in New York, for if he had been, he would never have been permitted to make an explanation.

Having been afforded the opportunity, however, he made it by simply producing his warrant and handing it to the sergeant.

"That is my excuse, sergeant," he said.

The officer read over the document with a knitted brow, and when he had completed the perusal, turned to the expectant crowd and said:

"Why, gentlemen, you have made a great mistake. This gentleman is a detective—one of the greatest in the world—and he holds a warrant for one of your members."

The stillness of death ensued.

And then somebody ventured in a timid voice:

"Who is it the warrant calls for?"

"Count Leander D'Arville," replied the sergeant.

"What is the charge?" demanded several, in braver tones now.

"Conspiracy and theft," was the reply.

A chorus of groans went up.

Then a revulsion of sentiment was visible everywhere.

From looks of astonishment and horror, their countenances assumed the blackest of scowls.

"Where is he?" began to resound from every quarter.

At the same time every one looked about for the erring count; but strange to say, he was no longer there!

This being announced every nook and corner of the immense club-house was scoured for him, but to no purpose.

Taking advantage of the *melee*, the wary scoundrel had made good his escape.

When it was ascertained that the count had actually fled from the building, the members gathered about the detective to express their sympathy and condolence, shook his hand warmly, and promised to use their best efforts in helping to apprehend and capture the culprit.

Even those whom he had given battered heads and bruised noses came forward, laughed the matter off and shook hands with him. Those who were particularly enthusiastic in athletics had to congratulate him on being the most expert boxer in a tight place and the hardest hitter, they had ever seen.

Some even advised him to give up the detective business and enter the prize-ring—to which he shook his head good-naturedly and replied:

"I might have done that twenty-five years ago, boys; but when a man reaches fifty or nearly so, it is rather late to think about going into the prize-ring, even if he has any taste for it, which I have not, thank goodness."

On taking his leave of the club, it was his purpose to visit the house in Spruce street, where the count had last taken lodgings, but on reaching the yard he thought of Hortense, and wondered what had become of her in the *melee*.

While he was pondering over this, and thinking of returning to the club-house to look for her, she suddenly glided up to him from somewhere, and said in a quiet little voice:

"Were you hurt, Mr. Burr?"

"Not the least, my girl," he replied.

"Where did you go?"

"I was there all the time—only I got into a corner so they could not get at me."

"Where do you propose to go now?" he asked.

"I don't know where I shall go," she said, with a careless little laugh; "but I think you had better go back to your lodgings in Girard avenue, for I shouldn't wonder if you find papa there."

"What makes you think so?"

"There is where he always goes when he is hard pushed. Go in that disguise, and insist upon being shown directly to his room; then he can't escape you."

"I shall follow your advice, my girl. And now, I want to thank you for the service you have already rendered me, and to apologize for mistrusting you at first. But, before I leave you, you must allow me to give you this," he went on, handing her a ten-dollar bill, "not as a gift, remember, but as a portion of your share of the reward."

"I thank you," she said, taking the money. "I shall accept it this time, not entirely because I need it, but because I feel that I have in a measure earned it."

"You certainly have. Now go somewhere—no," he hesitated. "Let me take you to a place. No respectable place will take a young girl in at this time of night."

So they re-entered the carriage, which had waited for them, and were driven, in accordance with Thad's direction, to the home of Miss Melrose. When Thad had explained who the girl was, and all about it, Miss Melrose welcomed Hortense into her house.

He then resumed his seat in the carriage, and was driven to his Girard avenue lodgings.

As he was still in the disguise of the doctor, instead of letting himself in with his pass-key, he rung the bell, and when the servant came to the door, inquired if Count D'Arville was in.

The attendant replied in the negative, and after he had closed the door, the detective removed his gray beard and wig, opened the door with his pass-key, and stole noiselessly up to his room.

He did not reach it unobserved, however, as he had reason to know, for as he tip-toed along the upper hall he became aware of the soft opening of a door to a scarcely perceptible distance; and, although he could see no one, he was convinced that some one's eyes were peering out at him.

The discovery made him feel a trifle uncomfortable, as he had desired to reach his room without the inmates of the house being aware of it, and the fact of his being watched showed that there was something wrong, somewhere.

To such a degree did the occurrence impress itself upon his mind, that for a long time after retiring he could not get to sleep.

He finally dropped off into a light doze, but it must have been exceedingly light and of short duration, for the stealthy opening and closing of a door somewhere caused him to become wide awake again.

When he opened his eyes and looked about and realized that he had slumbered, it occurred to him that he might have dreamed.

He glanced toward the window, which opened upon the street, and saw that the first gray streaks of morning were struggling in through the shade.

Something impelled him to rise and go to the window, roll up the shade and look out.

The clouds had cleared away, and the dull, drizzly night was just breaking into a clear, glorious day.

The shadows still lurked in the street, under the frown of the tall houses, however, and the rare occasional early travelers glided by like half shadowy specters.

Then the fancy seized him to raise the window and look up and down the great thoroughfare, and, as he stood, with his head half out of the window and his elbows resting on the ledge, he became conscious of a conversation being carried on in subdued tones directly beneath him!

The detective drew himself as far out as possible and craned his neck in the vain attempt to catch sight of the mysterious speakers, but all to no purpose. They were evidently concealed by the heavy casement

of the street door, and could not be seen from his view-point.

Scarcely a minute elapsed from the time he had become conscious of the voices when he heard the word "Good-by!" spoken and repeated, and, the next moment, he caught sight of a figure moving away from the door and descending the steps.

But the sight was only a source of disappointment, for the detective had confidently expected to see the conspirator, whereas it was only a bent old man in a ragged coat and with a market basket on his arm.

"Some old servant going to market," he mused, and closed the window, half-angry with himself for having tried to discover the identity of such a nondescript.

A second later, however, the affair presented itself in an entirely different light.

"What should a servant be doing at the front door?" he asked himself. "He would have left the house by the area door. Besides, why should he stand talking at the street door, and to whom? And why should there be a parting farewell, such as might only be expected on the eve of a long journey?"

All these questions flashed through Thad's mind in a twinkling, and his mind was made up.

He had already tarried too long, perhaps, but he would do what he could to make amends, so he hurried on his clothes in a remarkably brief space of time, and, a minute later, had descended the stairs and was on the street.

As he glided down the stairs with the swiftness and noiselessness of a flying shadow, he again became conscious of the soft opening of the same door, and again realized that he was being spied upon.

But, he did not hesitate on that account.

He had but one object in view now, and that was to overhaul the pretended market-man and ascertain whether he was real or bogus.

When he reached the street he paused long enough to cast his eyes in first one direction and then the other in the hope of catching sight of his man.

But he had already disappeared.

It was only a question of chance, therefore, which direction he took, and he instantly chose the down-town course, and started off at a run.

He took a keen survey of each cross street as he passed it, and dashed on.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"AM I MISTAKEN?"

THAD kept up his pace for the distance of half a dozen of the long Quaker City blocks, and was becoming well-nigh winded.

Pedestrians whom he dashed past stopped to look at him, wondering, no doubt, whether he was an escaped convict or some poor parent or husband going for the doctor.

The stolid policemen of the staid city also paused on their beats to cast a questioning stare after the fleeing man.

At length as he arrived opposite a cross-street and gazed first in one direction and then the other, he noticed a figure at the distance of half a block away, moving along at a rapid pace.

The narrow cross street was still too much in shadow to admit of very clear perception, but it struck the detective that the figure bore a vague resemblance to the man he had seen leaving the Jerome house a few minutes before.

Without hesitation, he put down the street in pursuit.

Although he had ceased to run, he found it necessary to keep up a rapid walk in order to gain upon the pedestrian ahead of him.

The nearer he drew to the fugitive the more convinced he became that he was the man wanted.

He also became convinced of another thing ere he had gone far.

There was no market in the direction in which the fellow was going, while, if he kept on in that course he would ultimately arrive at the Pennsylvania Railroad depot.

Thad thereupon quickened his pace and was not long in coming near enough to satisfy himself beyond a doubt that the man was the same who had left the house that morning.

The man did not appear to be suspicious or

anxious, for he had never once turned his head to look behind and kept straight upon his course as if he had no other object in the world than that of reaching his destination.

At length they arrived at the depot, and when it became apparent that the fugitive intended to enter Thad closed up on him and kept within a few feet of him.

The man with the basket ambled along through the waiting-room and approached the ticket-office, but reached the window only to find it closed.

Thad had purposely placed himself in such a position that, when the fellow turned from the window, he came face to face with his pursuer.

The two were not more than two feet apart, and Thad's sharp eyes made a rapid but careful survey of the other's face.

And it was enough, for, in spite of the shaggy beard of a dirty gray, and the shaggier eyebrows of the same hue, those tell-tales, the eyes and nose were there, and the detective was sure of his game.

The fellow had never seen him in his natural guise before, and did not recognize him, so that it was a great surprise and shock to him when the tireless New Yorker suddenly clutched him by the collar and said:

"Leander Livingstone, alias Count D'Arville, you are my prisoner!"

The conspirator made no effort to free himself from the detective's powerful grasp, and summoning all the coolness he ever possessed, replied with surprising calmness:

"You are mistaken, sir. I am not the man you are looking for. My name is Hubbel Stout; I am a market-gardener and I live at Germantown, across the river."

"Am I mistaken?" cried the detective. "Let us see whether I am or not."

And with one swipe he denuded the fellow of beard and wig, leaving the natural face and head of the great conspirator:

"Now what have you to say?" he muttered.

The count took it philosophically, and even smiled, although a trifle sarcastically.

"Well, all I have got to say is, that you have got me," he replied calmly; "but I have given you a tight race for it, old fellow."

"So you have, and only for your meanness and pusillanimity I could almost admire you for your pluck and genius."

"What do you mean by meanness and pusillanimity?" demanded the other with a look of astonishment.

"Why, your brutality toward your wife and daughter."

"You evidently do not know what you are saying," rejoined A'Drville, coloring with indignation.

"I saw quite sufficient last night at the club to convince me. But, we have no time to discuss these matters, here. Will you accompany me peaceably, so that we may go, respectfully, in a hack, or will you compel me to call a police patrol?"

"A police patrol? Bah!" cried the fastidious count. "No, sir, my way is always the respectable way. I shall probably have to wallow with the herd soon enough; let me go uncontaminated as long as possible, if you please."

"Very well; but it will be necessary for me to present you with this token of regard, my dear count."

So saying, the detective slipped the darbies upon his wrists with such dexterity that it astonished him.

"You do these things much more neatly over here," observed the count with a smile. "On the other side the bailiffs are a clumsy, thick fingered lot of bunglers, and they go at a gentleman when they wish to handcuff him as though they were chaining a mad bull. There is an artistic way of doing everything."

"You have worn these ornaments before, then?"

"Oh, quite frequently. I have tasted the fare of most of the best prisons of the world, I think, and know their rules and customs. I shall reform one of these days and write a book for good folks to weep over. It will be charming—truly."

Thad ordered a hack and the two drove quietly away without attracting much notice.

As they rode along the count revived the question of his alleged brutality.

"You referred to my ill-treatment of my wife and daughter a while ago," he began.

"Yes, I have been informed that you had treated them most brutally," rejoined the detective.

"And your informant was?"

"Oh, I had several."

"I think I can name them," he said with a smile. "The woman calling herself my wife, the girl calling herself my daughter and a fellow named Monte Munson. Am I not right?"

"You are."

"Now, so far as Munson's statement is concerned, it was pretty near correct. The woman left him to come with me, but I never had anything more to do with her than to provide her with money when she and her child were starving. Why should I? She was fifty years old, if she was a day, and if you have seen her you know how much attraction there is about her for a man of the world. No, sir, as God is my witness, whatever other crimes I may have been guilty of, I never mistreated either the woman or her daughter; and, although I was not in any way obliged to do so, provided them money to subsist upon until I found the woman was trying to blackmail me for a large sum by threatening to betray me to the police, and then I told her to shift for herself, as any other man would have done."

"The girl is not your daughter, then?"

"No more than she is yours. Couldn't you see the resemblance in her to her mother? And do you perceive any resemblance between her and me?"

After a careful scrutiny of the fellow's face, Thad admitted the premise, but questioned:

"But, how do you account for the girl's desire to betray you, and have you arrested? Did you not see that it was through her I was enabled to get into the club last night?"

"Yes, I saw that, and that was what made me so furious when I saw her there; and only for her presence in the place I should not have suspected you. Well, the only reason I can assign for her hatred, if such she entertains, is that, of all ingrates, those whom you have assisted in the hour of need are the worst. I would rather ten thousand times trust my fate to the man whom I had wronged than the one whom I had befriended, if he be an ingrate."

"But, how came it that the girl had such easy access to the club?" inquired Thad.

"Oh, the boys have seen her about there so much when she used to come to me for money for herself and her mother, that they had become well acquainted with her; and, being a rather bright and interesting girl, they naturally took a fancy to her."

"Tell me, is she a good girl?"

"So far as I know, she is. In fact, I cannot believe that she is anything else. Her only fault is the trait inherited from the father and mother both, of ingratitude and the insatiable desire to work a benefactor for all he is worth. She possessed very little natural affection, which is evinced by her indifference toward her mother. There has been no time since my acquaintance with them that she would not rather be with me than with her mother."

"You did not have her confined to the wretched tenement in Avenue A, New York, then?"

"Let me answer that by asking you another question. You got her away from there—did you have any difficulty about it? Was there any coercion shown on the part of anybody?"

"To tell you the truth, there was not," admitted the detective.

"I know," resumed the count, with a tone of bitterness, "that it has been the policy of the mother to represent to everybody that I was having her daughter detained there, when common sense should have told them that such a thing was impossible, as the mother could have gone to the Gerry Society, or even the Police Department, and had her released, if such had been the case."

"How is it that the mother claims that the daughter is yours, and not hers?"

"God only knows. Another part of her policy, I presume."

"And yet the woman must have borne a good deal of affection for you."

"I have no doubt she did—at times. She was variable. She had good impulses, and very bad ones."

"What sort of an impulse do you imagine it was when she murdered Albert Beach because he possessed evidence damaging to you?"

The count laughed.

"That, I should say, was a mixture, or to use a more common phrase—a blend."

The count was taken to a police court for commitment, and then removed to the county jail.

Thad was still with him endeavoring to prevail upon him to make a confession, which the wily adventurer put off in a good-natured way, when Hortense, the girl, arrived.

She had, somehow, obtained admission to his presence, and at sight of her foster-father, she ran and threw her arms about his neck, and burst into sobs.

"Forgive me, papa!" she wailed; "please forgive me! I did not know what I was doing."

It was a severe struggle even for the placid count, and he at last, broke down and wept like a child.

"Yes, my child!" he sobbed, "my own Hortense, I do forgive you. It serves me right. I deserve it all. You and not I are the wronged one. You have suffered enough at my hands, and now it is my turn to suffer. Ask your mother to forgive me before she dies, child."

And this was as near an explanation of the mystery as was ever obtained. Nobody ever knew which one of the various stories was the correct one. Nobody ever knew positively whether Hortense was the daughter of the count or not. But, there was some property which could not be shown to have been obtained dishonestly, and this he made over to her before his incarceration for a term of twenty years in the State's Prison.

The mother, already afflicted with the dread disease consumption, soon became a stricken prey to it, and before the time set for her execution, a higher executioner struck the fatal blow.

THE END.

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